



# The London Safety Plan

## 2004/2005

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Son sayfayı çevirin

अंतिम पन्ना देखें

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# Contents

	<b>Page No.</b>
Foreword by Val Shawcross – Chair of the Authority .....	3
Prevention is better than cure.....	3
Partnerships .....	3
A more effective service .....	3
Facing the threat from terrorism.....	3
Reflecting the community we serve.....	3
Introduction by Ken Knight .....	4
Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning.....	4
<b>Part 1 .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Introduction: our new risk-based approach to protecting London .....	5
The case for change .....	5
The London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority.....	6
Mayor's priorities for London .....	6
Our finances.....	7
London: its changing face.....	8
Our services .....	9
London resilience.....	10
Equalities and diversity .....	11
Our targets .....	12
Our main priorities .....	13
(A) Prevention .....	13
(B) Cure.....	15
(C) People.....	15
(D) Management arrangements .....	15
Future development of our plans to make London a safer city.....	16
External limitations .....	16
<b>Part 2 .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Identifying and understanding risk.....	19
What we know about risks in London .....	20
Fire deaths .....	20
Injuries .....	25
Fires.....	28
Arson.....	29
False alarms.....	30
Emergencies not involving any risk of fire (special services).....	30
Progress towards achieving our headline targets .....	31
Reducing the number of fires .....	31
Reducing the number of deaths from fire .....	31
Injuries from fire.....	31
False alarms.....	31
Our performance compared with other metropolitan fire authorities.....	32
Other work to look at our effectiveness.....	33
<b>Part 3 .....</b>	<b>35</b>
Our plans to improve safety in London .....	35
A gradual approach .....	35
Core principles used to develop this plan .....	36
Proposals for reducing accidental fires in the home.....	36
Proposals for reducing non-accidental fires .....	38
Reducing the impact of fires.....	40

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Responding to calls for assistance at fires .....	42
Mobilising .....	43
Automatic fire alarms .....	45
The role of call receiving centres .....	47
Our fire engines and other specialist vehicles .....	48
Fire engines .....	48
Other specialist vehicles .....	48
Operational resource centres .....	48
Fire rescue units .....	49
Lewisham .....	49
Aerial appliances .....	49
Wimbledon (ALP) .....	49
Paddington .....	51
Chelsea .....	51
London resilience .....	51
Incident response units .....	51
Lorries and personnel carriers .....	52
Belsize .....	52
Bulk water carriers .....	54
Hazardous materials incident laboratories .....	54
Hygiene and welfare units .....	54
Other vehicles .....	54
Property issues .....	54
Emergency planning .....	54
Working to prevent emergencies not involving a risk of fire .....	56
Responding to calls for assistance at incidents not involving any risk of fire .....	57
(A) Releasing people shut in lifts .....	57
(B) Flooding .....	59
(C) Road traffic accidents .....	59
(D) Helping people locked out of buildings .....	60
(E) Making structures safe .....	60
Other special services .....	60
Helping people who are having a heart attack .....	61
Longer-term approach to special services .....	61
Charging for special services .....	62
Chemical incidents .....	63
All other special services incidents where .....	63
Level of charges .....	63
Part 4 .....	65
Our people .....	65
Health and safety and the environment .....	67
Part 5 .....	69
Our approach to improving quality and efficiency .....	69
Public private partnerships .....	70
Planning and performance monitoring framework .....	70

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## Foreword by Val Shawcross – Chair of the Authority

This is the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority's first *London Safety Plan* which sets out what we will do to help make London a safer city.

The last year has been a difficult time for everyone in the fire and rescue service, but now that agreement has been reached on the firefighters' pay dispute we want to seize the opportunity to modernise the service and make real improvements in the safety of people living and working in, or visiting London.

We welcome the commitment from the government to introduce new legislation (as proposed in the White Paper *Our Fire & Rescue Service*) which will give us the flexibility and the powers we need to modernise our service and improve safety in London.

We want to play our part in reducing the risks faced by Londoners, not only from fire but also from other emergencies. We believe that the best way to do that is to work harder to stop potential emergencies happening in first place. Prevention is better than cure.

### Prevention is better than cure

We plan to increase the efforts we put into community fire safety by

- offering home risk assessments to people most at risk from fire
- expanding our work with young people who have a history of starting fires or of making false alarm calls
- targeting our fire safety campaigns at older people, who we know to be at higher risk from fire.

### Partnerships

Improved community safety is not something we can deliver by ourselves, so we will work closely with our partners: the other emergency services, the GLA, the London boroughs and local people and businesses, to improve the safety and quality of life for Londoners. This is why we propose to team up with the London Ambulance Service to run a pilot project in Tower

Hamlets to improve the emergency services response to people suffering a heart attack.

### A more effective service

Maintaining our capacity to deliver a fast, effective and sustained emergency response remains essential. This plan contains no proposals to change the number of fire stations or fire engines we keep available to respond to fires and other emergencies. However we plan to use our emergency vehicles more sensibly, in particular to reduce the number of times they are sent to incidents where they are not actually needed. By doing this, we will release time at fire stations for more prevention and community safety work.

### Facing the threat from terrorism

We are all aware of the increased threat from terrorist attack in London, following the tragic events in New York in 2001. We have already started to introduce additional equipment to improve our resilience to respond to a major disaster and, with support from the government and the GLA, we will be introducing a range of new vehicles and equipment over the next year which will be ready to help protect London in the event of a tragedy.

### Reflecting the community we serve

We have made excellent progress in developing a more diverse workforce.

- we've increased the number of black and minority ethnic firefighters by nearly 50 per cent
- and increased the number of women firefighters by 75 per cent

While I am delighted at this progress, we need to build on this start so that we can achieve a truly representative workforce.

We have consulted widely on our proposals before agreeing them, and we will now concentrate on delivering real improvements in the safety of Londoners and those who work in and visit our city.

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## Introduction by Ken Knight

### Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning

I am proud to be the Commissioner of London's fire and rescue service, especially at such an exciting time when we are shaping the future of this vital public service.

Now that agreement has been reached on the firefighters' pay dispute, we can all move forward to develop a more flexible and effective service; one which makes real improvements in community safety across London.

Until now we have had to operate under some outdated and restrictive national guidance about how we should operate. I welcome the government's commitment to change this, and put in place new legislation and a new national framework which will allow us the flexibility to develop a risk-based approach to the service.

This plan sets out what we already know about the risks which people across London face, about who is most at risk from fire in particular, about how effective our current arrangements are in responding to those risks, and those areas where we are not using our resources effectively at the moment.

I am committed to working harder to try and stop emergencies happening in the first place; not only fires but also other incidents. By doing so we can avoid the hurt, distress and damage, and the knock on effects on the local economy and the local environment which result from fires and other disasters.

But I am also committed to ensuring that if something does go wrong, London Fire Brigade will be there to help you with an effective and safe response: 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We are all aware of the increased threat from terrorists, particularly in London as the capital city and

Europe's financial centre. We are therefore making substantial investment, with support from government and the Mayor of London, to improve our resilience to respond to catastrophic acts of terrorism or other disasters. The first additional vehicles and equipment are already in place in our fire stations, and many more will come into service over the coming year.

London is a vibrant and diverse city, and one of the most exciting challenges in leading London's fire and rescue service is to make sure that we engage with all parts of the community, and that we recognise and respond to their differing needs and aspirations. I am proud to work in the fire and rescue service, and I am committed to ensuring that all parts of the community understand the opportunities, and the job satisfaction, which can come from a career in the service; particularly those parts of the community who have not traditionally seen it as a career opportunity. In many ways London has led the country in opening up the service, and increasing the number of black and minority ethnic and women firefighters. I look forward to building on the good start which has already been made, and developing a workforce which does reflect the communities we serve.

This plan sets out a phased approach to improving our services – developing and expanding our community safety and fire safety enforcement work before making any substantial changes to the way we deliver our emergency response. However it does identify some ways in which we can use our equipment and our trained and professional staff more effectively.

I believe that the approach outlined in this plan will deliver a fire and rescue service which will meet the changing demands on it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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# Part 1

## Introduction: our new risk-based approach to protecting London

1. This London Safety Plan is about the improvements we propose to make over the next few years to make London a safer city. It sets out how we will change London's fire and rescue service so that we can reduce the risks faced by those living and working in, or visiting, London, whether from fire or other emergencies, while also continuing to provide a fast, effective and resilient response when emergencies happen.
2. The plan represents a major shift in focus for the fire and rescue service. It sets out how we will use risk management principles to plan our resources so that we can have the maximum impact on improving community safety. It is about looking at the combined effects of prevention work, fire safety enforcement and the emergency response and considering how a shift in the balance between these activities can make us more effective in protecting local communities.
3. While we will take rapid action in a number of areas where we think it will have an immediate impact on improving community safety, we will phase our improvements over a number of years; learning from our efforts to improve community safety through more effective and better targeted prevention work before we make major changes to the way in which we plan and deliver our emergency response.
4. The plan is the result of new government guidance, which we warmly welcome. It is consistent with the approach outlined in the government's draft national framework for the fire and rescue service, and with the approach set out in the White Paper *Our Fire Rescue Service* which is expected to be reflected in the new Fire & Rescue Service Bill when it is laid before Parliament early in 2004. Once implemented, the plan will put in place the framework for a new and invigorated approach to delivery of the fire and rescue service in London.

## The case for change

5. The fire service is a highly regarded public service, but the government's recent White Paper *Our Fire and Rescue Service* nevertheless provides a clear summary of the case for change:

"Traditionally, the fire and rescue service has organised its staffing levels and the location of its firefighters, stations and appliances to match nationally prescribed fire cover standards. That means that there are a number of set standards for sending a given number of appliances within a given number of minutes to a fire that has broken out. The level of fire cover in an area depends chiefly on how built-up that area is. The more buildings, the more fire cover. Those standards were set originally in the 1930s.

However, we know from the evidence of recent years that the incidence of fires tends to vary between different types of buildings in particular locations and at particular times of the day."
6. The government has now asked each fire authority to produce an integrated risk management plan. It describes the aim of these plans as:

"to bring about improved community safety – and to make a more productive use of fire and rescue service resources – by:

  - reducing the incidence of fires;
  - reducing loss of life in fires and accidents;

- reducing the number and severity of injuries occurring in fires and other emergencies;
- safeguarding the environment and protecting the national heritage; and
- providing communities with value for money.

This is achieved by making an informed assessment of the risks in the area and the best ways to manage them, looking at prevention, enforcement and response".

7. This is London's plan, which was agreed after widespread consultation with the public and interested parties during the final quarter of 2003.
8. We will consult each year on our latest plan, so that you have a chance to comment on further proposed changes before we take any firm decisions.

## The London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority

9. The London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) was set up as one of the functional bodies of the Greater London Authority. Members of the Authority are appointed by the Mayor of London (Ken Livingstone) from the London Assembly (nine members) and the London Boroughs (eight members). Currently the Authority has seven members from the Labour Party, six from the Conservative Party, three from the Liberal Democrat Party and one from the Green Party.
10. The Mayor also appoints the Chair of the Authority and Valerie Shawcross CBE has been the Chair since the Authority was set up in 2000.
11. The London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority is responsible for London's fire and rescue services. As well as attending fires, we enforce laws on fire safety, provide advice on fire safety to the public and to the business community and use our resources to provide assistance at a range of non-fire emergencies. We also carry out various emergency planning activities, including helping the London boroughs to plan for emergencies.

### Mayor's priorities for London

12. The Mayor has a vision for London that provides the framework within which he expects us to work, as well as the GLA itself and the other three functional bodies that make up the GLA group (the Metropolitan Police Authority, Transport for London and the London

Development Agency). This vision is to develop London as:

- An **exemplary sustainable world city**, based on three balanced and connected elements:
  - Strong and varied economic growth.
  - Allowing all Londoners to share in London's future success.
  - Basic improvements in environmental management and the use of resources.
- A **prosperous city**, in which everybody shares in the benefits of wealth created in London's ever-changing economy.
- A **city for people** that has safe, attractive streets, where goods and services are within easy reach, and where everyone feels safe and secure.
- An **accessible city** with fast, efficient and comfortable transport, and access to affordable homes, education and training, health, leisure and recreation.
- A **fair city** showing tolerance and abolishing all forms of discrimination, and where neighbourhoods and communities have a say in their futures.
- A **green city** which makes efficient use of natural resources and energy, respects the natural world and wildlife, makes the most of open spaces, eco-friendly design, and construction methods, recycles waste, and creates new green industries.

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13. These objectives link into specific overall targets which the Mayor has set for the separate functional bodies. That target for us is to make London a safer city.
  14. We have also made sure that this plan is consistent with the Mayor's strategies for improving life for those living and working in London and we will work closely with the Mayor and London Assembly in looking at how our work can help to deliver those strategies.

### **Our finances**

15. The Mayor proposes this Authority's overall budget requirement (that is the amount of money we are able to receive from the GLA from a combination of government grant, council tax and business rate income) as part of his spending plans for the whole GLA group. The Mayor's proposed budget is agreed, unless the London Assembly agrees an alternative budget with a two-thirds majority. We then decide how to spend the money available to us.
16. In 2003/04 our revenue budget is £369m, plus a £16.3m capital programme. In addition the Authority chose to use £3m from its reserves to support additional expenditure. This budget included over £2m reductions from efficiency savings and included a sum of £11m to improve our resilience in responding to major acts of terrorism or other catastrophic events. Allowing for government grant and business rate income, this budget represent a notional precept on council taxpayers (Band D) across London of £39.73 a year (or 76 pence a week).
17. The Authority has agreed a medium term financial strategy for the three years 2004/05 to 2006/07 and has submitted its detailed budget proposals for 2004/05 to the Mayor of London. The Mayor has also published his budget proposals for the GLA Group as a whole, in the light of the submissions he received. These budget proposals reflect the costs and savings arising from this plan, which are set out in the attached action plan. Final decisions on our budget requirement for 2004/05 will be taken by

the Mayor and London Assembly in February 2004 and we will confirm our detailed budget in March 2004.

18. When looking at our future financial plans we took account of a number of important issues, including:
  - development of this London Safety Plan and its impact on how we deploy our resources;
  - the implications for this Authority of the heightened risk of terrorist activity;
  - reform of fire safety laws;
  - the continued focus on community fire safety and efforts both to prevent fire breaking out and make sure people know how to minimise danger to themselves when fire does break out;
  - the Authority's commitment to its equalities policies, and its continuing efforts to make sure our services are delivered in a way which is responsive to the different needs and expectations of different parts of the community and that our workforce is representative of the communities it serves;
  - payment of the recently agreed national pay award and local negotiations with the trade unions about modernisation of the pay and terms and conditions of employment, in line with that national agreement;
  - the continued development of public private partnerships to deliver essential support services, where these can help to support service improvements (in particular our Corporate Property Project and the Integrated Clothing Project);
  - the completion of major capital projects, in particular the introduction of the new mobilising system and the development of a replacement for the main radio scheme; and, looking further ahead, addressing the prospective need and costs for new headquarters accommodation;

- the impact of the rapid development of information technology, and the need to meet the government's targets for e-governance.

19. We do not yet know the detailed financial implications of all these factors or the phasing of their impact. We must therefore remain flexible, and able to respond to future changes (whether

caused by the Authority or others) over the coming years; while retaining a sharp focus to succeed in our various initiatives to reduce both the number of fires, and the deaths and injuries they cause and improve our impact on other emergencies. Our budget proposals for 2004/05 are designed to maintain this flexibility.

## London: its changing face

20. London is the country's capital city, with a vibrant diverse population and a thriving business community. It is a major magnet for visitors – from both the UK and abroad.

21. Its population has been steadily growing since 1989 and is currently some 7.4 million. The Mayor of London, in his draft London Plan, projects that it will grow by a further 700,000 by 2016. The draft London Plan also states that "the population is also changing and now includes more young people, many more in Black and minority ethnic communities and more young newcomers from across Europe". This diversity is expected to grow, with a significant growth in Black and minority ethnic communities.

22. The draft London Plan forecasts that while the number of people in the over 75 age group (a group at higher risk from fire) will decline slightly, all other age groups are set to increase (the most significant increases being in the 15-29 and 45-59 age groups).

23. The draft London Plan identifies that "inequality has grown dramatically in London over the last 25 years:

"Measured solely in terms of GDP per head London is the wealthiest region in the country. However, the distribution of income is profoundly unequal. London has higher concentrations of people in both high- and low-income bands than the rest of Great Britain... London has some of the highest rates of poverty in the UK...43 per cent of London's children are living in poverty...Importantly, these measures may be an underestimate of the true extent of

poverty as they omit key groups such as asylum seekers or travellers".

"London has the second highest unemployment rate in England, second only to the North East. While the unemployment rate for white Londoners is in line with the rate for white people in the rest of the UK at 5.1 per cent, the rate for ethnic minorities is 13.5 per cent. This is not only much higher than the rate for white people but also higher than the rate for ethnic minorities outside London".

24. This level of poverty and deprivation is significant for us, because of the well-established link with increased risk from fire.

25. London is the centre of national government. The City of London is a pre-eminent financial centre in the world and the central area contains a concentration of major commercial, retail, entertainment, and cultural facilities. London also has a concentration of major heritage sites. This means that millions of people travel into and around London each day for work, shopping or leisure. The transport infrastructure is therefore a key feature of city life, with road, rail and underground travel all experiencing significant congestion at certain times. This increases the risks associated with travel, which we believe we must always be prepared to respond to.

26. The nature of London as a capital city, financial hub, and popular tourist centre means that it is at particular risk from the possibility of major acts of terrorism and so a priority for us is to plan for and make sure we have the resilience to respond to any major acts of terrorism or other major

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emergency which may occur. This is done in close co-operation with the government, the other emergency services and the London boroughs.

27. London also faces significant challenges in protecting and improving the quality of its environment. There are particular concerns about air quality, noise pollution and waste management. We work closely with the Mayor and London Assembly on environmental issues and seek to make sure that all our activities are carried out in a way which protects the environment.

### **Our services**

28. We provide services across the whole of the Greater London area. This is an area covering some 640 square miles (just over 1,58700 square kilometres). This means that we run the largest fire and rescue service in the country with some 6,800 staff in total including some 5,700 operational firefighters.
29. We run an extensive programme of enforcing fire safety legislation across London, focusing our efforts on those buildings that present the greatest risks to the public, including those working there. We have developed an increasingly active programme of community fire safety and education, developing close partnerships with the London Boroughs and a range of other agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors where working together can help to improve community safety.
30. We have 112 fire stations (plus a river station on the Thames) all of which operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We run 170 fire engines and a further 37 specialist operational vehicles (though this is about to increase) which are available to attend incidents whenever they may occur. We work closely with the other emergency services to make sure we provide an effective and co-ordinated response to the public at major incidents.
31. We are very proud to run a well-respected and professional service and our staff are key to delivering the improvements we want to make. We will work closely with them when implementing this plan. The health and safety of our staff is, and will remain, of paramount concern and we will continue to do all we can to maintain safe systems of working for all our staff, especially those who in the course of their daily work can be exposed to hazardous environments in order to protect the public.
32. We believe that the fire and rescue service is part of the mainstream of local government and has an important role to play in improving the quality of life in London. This is why we have recently changed the organisation of the Brigade, putting in place a borough-based structure. A borough commander is in place to plan and deliver all services in each of the 32 London boroughs (plus the City of London) and borough teams have been established to support the borough commander in the delivery of services locally. This will help us to improve joint working at borough level.
33. A key priority for the borough commanders has been the development of closer links with the borough council, and active participation in local programmes to tackle crime and disorder, social exclusion and economic regeneration. We have also developed a range of partnerships with local agencies where this can help improve community safety. A number of innovative local initiatives have been launched which have shown the benefits which can be delivered from this new structure.
34. We have started a programme to open up selected fire stations, making them more accessible to local communities as a source of advice on safety issues. We have already opened eight fire and community safety centres (at Edmonton, Hammersmith, Wembley, Lewisham, Croydon, Finchley, East Ham and Bromley) which provide a centre for the borough teams in each of those boroughs, together with much improved public access. We will continue this

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- programme of property improvements to establish similar facilities in each borough.
35. We need a range of support services (for example, financial, human resources, and legal services) and have also developed several innovative partnerships with the private sector to provide essential support services such as our vehicle fleet (including our fire engines), the personal protective equipment used by our firefighters, and to release the potential value from our extensive property portfolio spread across London.
36. As the largest Brigade in the country, and because of the nature of the risks within London, we play a major role in national developments in the UK fire and rescue service. This is achieved through close working with the government (the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate), the Local Government Association (which represents fire authorities collectively), the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association (which represents principal fire officers across the country) and through contacts with a range of bodies such as the Audit Commission and the fire industry.

### **London resilience**

37. In parallel to the development of this plan, we have been looking over the last year at how we can improve London's resilience by developing the Brigade's capacity to respond to and work with other agencies to cope with a variety of different emergencies, including environmental disasters and terrorist attacks, which could involve a risk of fire.
38. The London Fire Brigade performs a key role in protecting Londoners from the consequences of major, or even catastrophic, incidents. This role has been brought into sharp focus following the terrorist attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001. Consequently, we have been working with partners (the other emergency services, the government, the GLA, and the boroughs) to improve still further our ability to respond to and deal with these incidents.
39. As a result of this work we are introducing additional vehicles and equipment to help us to perform this role. These vehicles will be an integral part of our capability to provide assistance at a range of emergencies (for example, they will also improve our ability to respond to a major incident at an airport or on the railways) and will be available for use at any incident where they can make a contribution. They will not be kept in storage only to be brought out if and when a major incident happens.
40. The improvements in public safety which these vehicles and equipment will provide should be made as soon as possible. We are therefore bringing them into service as soon as the vehicles and equipment are available and our crews have been trained in their safe use.
41. Funding for these new vehicles and equipment has come from three main areas:
- our budget for 2003/04 approved by the Mayor and London Assembly included provision of some £11m to meet the costs of the vehicles, equipment, personnel and training we need to improve our capacity to respond to these types of events. We also agreed with the Mayor and Assembly that this would need to rise to £19.5m (including capital) in 2004/05 and £17.4m (including capital) in 2005/06 and these remain our plans;
  - the government has provided the Brigade with four interim incident response units, which have the ability to handle mass decontamination of the public. They will soon be replaced with ten purpose-built vehicles. These vehicles and their equipment have been purchased centrally by the government for use by the Brigade in London. They have been paid for from the £53m of funding provided by the government to provide a national public mass decontamination capability;
  - early this year the government provided us with £2m of funding to make immediate

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improvements to our capacity to respond to these type of events.

42. This substantial expansion in the services we provide will require some permanent increases in staffing to improve our resilience, but we will explore the extent to which some of these additional vehicles could be crewed in other ways such as alternate crewing (that is when the crew of one appliance move over to operate a different vehicle as and when necessary). This is reflected in our budget proposals for 2004/05 which we submitted to the Mayor.

### **Equalities and diversity**

43. A key priority for us is to develop our services in a way which is sensitive to the differing needs and aspirations of different parts of London's diverse communities. In order to engage with each of those communities effectively we must develop and maintain a workforce which is representative of the communities we serve. This will not only help us to provide more responsive services, but will also help to build confidence in each community that we understand and respect their particular situation and concerns.
44. We have an obligation in all our work, as employer or service provider, to have regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity irrespective of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion, to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote good relations between people of different racial groups, religious beliefs and sexual orientation.
45. We will continue to develop programmes, working in partnership with other agencies, to make sure we not only meet these objectives, but can also show that we are meeting them. For example, we are one of the first organisations to have put in place arrangements to collect information which will enable us to monitor the number of lesbians and gay men among our staff who are open at work about their sexuality.

46. We have worked closely with the GLA and the other functional bodies on equalities and diversity issues and have jointly agreed:

- to adopt and promote a London Equality Standard;
- a target to meet Level 5 (the top level) of the Equalities Standard for Local Government (as developed by the local authorities' Employers Organisation) by 31 March 2005;
- to adopt the social model of disability, which recognises the barriers placed on disabled people by social organisation and commits us to challenging and removing those barriers where possible;
- to strive to become exemplary employers;
- to work together to improve our approaches to community liaison and to deliver a more joined up approach, including improvements in information sharing;
- to work together to develop and improve our approaches to assessing the impact of our activities on different parts of the community and to develop appropriate support and training for our staff;
- to adapt the Commission for Racial Equalities toolkit for auditing race equality to address the areas of race, sex and disability;

47. We have published our Race Equality Scheme and will continue to publish annually monitoring information by racial group about our staff, and those who apply to join our organisation.
48. We have recruited a record number of new black and minority ethnic and women firefighters. We now have 422 black and minority ethnic firefighters (an increase of 54 per cent since January 2001) and 139 women firefighters (an increase of 96 per cent over the same period). While this is very good progress, we still need to build on this and start making further progress more quickly.
49. We will also continue to strive, both locally and by working to change the current national rules

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and regulations concerning recruitment and selection of firefighters, to make sure all the requirements we set to become a firefighter are clearly and demonstrably directly job related and that our selection and assessment techniques are non-discriminatory and have no unwanted and unintended adverse impacts on particular groups in the community.

50. We have a range of measures in place to support and help our staff achieve a fair work/life balance, through family friendly policies covering areas such as maternity and paternity leave, special leave arrangements, job sharing etc.
51. We have nearly completed our programme to make sure every fire station has separate washing and sleeping facilities for women firefighters.
52. We will continue to make sure our clothing, protective equipment and the design of our operational equipment is suitable for use by women as well as men.
53. We have arrangements in place to challenge and deal with harassment and bullying wherever it may occur in the organisation. This is backed up by confidential support arrangements available to staff through our Equalities Services, Advisory & Counselling Service and Occupational Health Service. There are also grievance procedures, a complaints and compliments procedure and arrangements for whistle-blowing, which staff who are unhappy with the way in which the issues are being managed are encouraged to use.
54. We have a programme in place to make sure we meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, and will have completed a programme to carry out the necessary building works by 2005.
55. We will continue to run a training programme for managers and their staff called *Training to Succeed*. This programme has been designed to make sure all managers and staff understand:

- the Authority's commitment to promoting equalities and celebrating diversity;
- our programme of action to turn that policy into action;
- their personal responsibilities for implementing that programme through every aspect of their day to day work;
- our arrangements to monitor the implementation of our policies and programmes.

56. A key output from this process will be to identify any remaining training needs for staff in this area; and managers, supported by our specialist training, human resources and equalities staff, will be responsible for making sure those training needs are then met.
57. We have also developed arrangements through our procurement strategies to:
  - make sure our contractors are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of London's diverse communities;
  - encourage London's diverse business communities to apply for Authority contracts, and make sure our contract strategies facilitate and encourage such applications;
  - promote equality of opportunity to all our contractors and collecting evidence to show their commitment.
58. We will monitor the success of these arrangements, and review and improve our procedures where necessary in the light of the information we collect.

### **Our targets**

59. In 2000, we set ourselves targets to achieve a 20 per cent reduction over five years (that is by April 2005) in:
  - the number of fires;
  - the number of deaths caused by fire;
  - the number of injuries caused by fire; and

- the number of false alarms caused by automatic fire alarms in non-domestic properties and in the number of hoax calls we receive.
60. Progress at hitting these targets has been mixed. This partly reflects the rigidity of national framework which has applied to the fire and rescue service up until now. We are confident that the changes set out in the plan will enable us to make more progress towards reducing fires, and fire deaths and injuries. These five-year targets will need to be reviewed and updated before March 2005, and we will do this over the coming year. However, external factors can cause difficulties in hitting targets; for example, the hot summer of 2003 led to a large increase in grass fires, and changes in the law about the disposal of old vehicles can affect the number of fires in abandoned cars.
61. We also believe that achievement of these targets, and delivering still further improvements in later years, cannot be delivered by the fire and rescue service alone. Developing and maintaining effective partnerships with other emergency services, with the local authorities, with other statutory and voluntary agencies, and with local businesses and local communities will be crucial.
62. The government have identified two new national targets:
- to reduce by 10 per cent the number of deliberate fires by 31 March 2010, from the 2001/02 baseline;
  - to reduce the number of accidental fire related deaths in the home by 20 per cent averaged over the 11 year period to 31 March 2010, compared with the average recorded over the five-year period to 31 March 1999 – with no local authority fire brigade having a fatality rate more than 1.25 times the national average by March 2010.
63. We will monitor and report our progress to make sure we are on track to meet these new national targets.
64. We believe that we have a significant role to play in helping to protect London's environment. We have agreed with the Environment Agency that the most important contribution we can make to environmental protection is to reduce the number of fires breaking out, given the potential damage to the environment from the largely uncontrolled release of pollutants from a fire. We will also take action to reduce the impact of our firefighting activities on the environment (for example, controlling the run off from materials used to put out fires).
65. We have not set targets to reduce the number of emergencies not involving any risk of fire, and mitigating their impact, as under the existing legislation we can only acquire resources (staff, vehicles or equipment) which we need for firefighting purposes (though we can and do use those resources to deal with a range of other incidents). We also cannot take account of non-fire related risks when deciding where we place our fire stations and fire engines. Once new legislation is passed giving us specific powers to reduce risks from non-fire related emergencies we will develop, in consultation with stakeholders, appropriate targets.

### **Our main priorities**

66. We are committed to achieving our main aim – which is to make London a safer city by minimising the risks, and social and economic costs, of fire and other hazards. Everything we do is designed to help us meet this aim. Our work can be divided into four main areas:

#### **(A) Prevention**

67. We want to stop fires and other emergencies happening. Our key objectives in prevention are:
- to enforce fire safety laws and take action when necessary to protect public safety;
  - to implement our community fire safety strategy;
  - to implement our arson reduction strategy and work with the boroughs and the police through

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crime and disorder partnerships to tackle deliberate fire setting and malicious false alarms;

- to reduce the number of unwanted false alarms due to automatic alarms in non-domestic buildings;
- to identify the causes of fire and use that information to help reduce risk of similar fires in the future;
- to improve public satisfaction with our services;
- to improve engagement with local communities;
- to improve access to the Authority's services for all parts of the community.

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**(B) Cure**

68. If a fire does break out or you need us for another emergency, we want to get to that incident as quickly and safely as we can, sending the right equipment and properly trained, competent people. We want to deal with the incident appropriately and then help you get back to normal as soon as you can. Our key objectives in cure are:

- to answer emergency calls promptly, mobilise the people and equipment needed to deal with that emergency and provide advice and reassurance to the caller;
- to respond to all calls for assistance at fires, rescue people in danger and put out the fire (unless this would risk more injury to people or more damage to property and/or the environment);
- to secure the resilience required to cope with the enhanced risk of a major terrorist attack;
- to provide assistance at emergencies not involving risk of fire;
- to reduce the number of unnecessary movements of our heavy vehicles at speed through the streets of London;
- to minimise damage at incidents caused either by fire or by the way in which we fight those fires – including damage to the environment;
- to prepare policies on aftercare and business continuity and put them into practice;
- to help the London boroughs and other public bodies plan for emergencies.

**(C) People**

69. Our people are our greatest asset and we want to respect other people's views and listen to what they say. Our key objectives for our people are:

- to develop as an organisation which embraces diversity and works to make sure that delivery of services is equitable;
- to improve representation of women and Black and minority ethnic staff across the organisation and improve their career development;
- to reduce levels of sickness and early retirements;
- to implement a safety management system and secure safe systems of work across the Authority;
- to implement our policies and processes to select, train, assess and promote individuals and the management systems to support them to make they sure they are competent. This is known as the integrated personal development system.

**(D) Management arrangements**

70. We want to provide best value for money services and operate in an effective and efficient manner. Our key objectives in our management arrangements are:

- to make sure our borough structure is effective in helping us to improve community safety;
- to develop and implement a performance management framework across the Authority;
- to secure continuous improvements in line with best value legislation;
- to make sure all relevant services are electronically enabled by 2005;
- to develop further our commitment to open access to information and to take forward our freedom of information publication scheme;
- to make sure our services are delivered effectively and efficiently.

71. This plan sets out in more detail the action we propose to take in each of these areas.

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## Future development of our plans to make London a safer city

72. We will roll forward this plan each year. This will be one in light of :
- our developing understanding of risk and the contribution we can make to reducing it;
  - the progress we have made in meeting our objectives and targets. Details on this are set out each year in our best value performance plan which is normally published in June each year;
  - any legislative changes made by government in line with the recently published White Paper and any associated Regulations, targets, standards or guidance which government may issue;
  - our progress in developing effective partnerships with other agencies where joint working can help to make London safer. These agencies will include the GLA and its functional bodies, the other emergency services, the London Boroughs and a range of agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors;
73. This will both develop our medium to long term strategy, and set out in greater detail the action we propose to take in the following financial year.
- our financial position;
  - the Mayor's targets for London as a whole and this Authority in particular.
74. We will consult on these proposals each year, before taking final decisions at the time our budget requirement is approved by the Mayor and London Assembly in January/February each year.

## External limitations

Some of the proposals set out in this plan have been prepared on the basis of the government's declared intention to change the national framework and on the assumption that greater flexibility and additional statutory powers will be made available. This needs to happen sooner rather than later if the momentum of change is to be maintained.

We therefore welcome the government's announcement that it will bring forward new legislation in this session of Parliament and its publication of a draft national framework for the fire and rescue service, which reflects the principles set out in the recent White Paper *Our Fire & Rescue Service*.

75. We hope that the following difficulties with the current national framework will be addressed through the new legislation and the supporting national framework for the fire and rescue service:
- currently there is no specific statutory duty on fire authorities to carry out community fire safety work (apart from enforcement of fire safety and other legislation), although it is part of firefighters' role. We believe that introduction of such a duty would be appropriate to underpin the need to balance our investment between prevention and intervention activities, and we are pleased that the government's planned reforms include a proposal to introduce such a duty;
  - fire authorities' powers to provide special services (that is to assist at incidents at which there is no risk of fire) are expressed as a power to use the brigade and its equipment, which is needed for firefighting purposes only. This means that at the moment we do not have specific powers to acquire any resources (staff or vehicles and equipment) **specifically** to deal with non-fire emergencies. It also means that we cannot take into full account non-fire related risks when determining the disposition

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of our resources. Unless and until fire authorities are given the powers to take account of non-fire risks when planning their resources we will be unable to implement in full the new approach to integrated risk management planning as now advocated by the government;

- currently we operate under some very prescriptive attendance standards recommended by the government, which set out the number of fire engines we should send to a fire, and how quickly they should arrive, based on an outdated, property-based system of area-based fire risk categorisation. For example if you live and work in central London you can expect two fire engines to respond to a fire within approximately five minutes and a third within eight, while in parts of outer London the standards are for a single fire engine to arrive within twenty minutes (although in practice we send two to any property fires). These standards no longer reflect the actual risks of injury and death from fire and the government has declared its intention to withdraw them.

76. In developing the national framework in particular we hope that the government will take early action to

- review the nature and content of any changes to the distribution mechanism for fire service grant needs to reflect this new risk based approach;
- modernise the arrangements for appointments and promotion for uniformed staff and for the firefighters' pension scheme (proposals to do this have now been published) ;
- clarify the roles to be taken by other agencies (such as the Fire Service College, the Fire Inspectorate and the Audit Commission).

77. However the government has yet not committed itself to making other changes which we consider need to be made if we are to be able to deliver improvements to the safety of those living and working in London.

- the fire and rescue service is responding to an increasing number of false alarms generated by malfunctioning automatic fire detection equipment. This is a drain on our resources, diverting time and effort away from other more important activities, such as community fire safety education work and training. It also causes considerable disruption to the owners and occupiers of the buildings where they go off. We believe we should be able to charge for repeated calls to the same building where this is as a result of faulty equipment;
- under the current fire safety regulations applying to workplaces, employers are required to carry out a fire risk assessment and to take steps to reduce the risk of fire. One effect of the 1947 Fire Services Act is that employers can ask a fire authority for advice on carrying out this assessment, and any such advice must be given free of charge. We believe that we should continue to give basic fire safety advice free of charge, but that where we give detailed advice for which an employer may otherwise pay a consultant to provide, we should be allowed to charge in fair competition with the private sector;
- National Health Service bodies have long had the power to recover from insurance companies a fixed charge when the ambulance service attends road traffic accidents. We believe that, where the public now expects the fire and rescue service to attend and provide assistance at such accidents (beyond dealing with any immediate risk of fire); it should also be able to make a charge in the same way that the NHS can. Indeed it might well be appropriate and economic for one body to collect the charges payable to these two emergency services;
- we believe that it would help fire authorities to develop closer and more effective partnerships with local authorities in their area, and with a range of other agencies if all fire authorities were given the power already enjoyed by

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county fire authorities to promote the well-being of their area.

78. Good progress has been made in national negotiations between the employers and trade unions and it is expected that early agreement will be reached on:
- the range and detail of nationally determined terms and conditions of employment and the scope provided to develop local terms and conditions;
  - the scope and nature of future industrial relations and disputes machinery.
79. Arrangements have been agreed with the Audit Commission for them to undertake work to verify that modernisation of the fire and rescue services is being delivered in line with the settlement of the recent dispute with the Fire Brigades Union.

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## Part 2

### Identifying and understanding risk

80. We have already collected a considerable amount of information about risks across London, and about our effectiveness in reducing and mitigating those risks. This information has been collected through:-
- inspecting buildings in order to enforce fire safety legislation;
  - visiting buildings to familiarise ourselves with their layout and any particular risks (we have a duty to do this under the Fire Services Act 1947);
  - information about the number of fires and other emergencies which we attend, and their incidence by location, time of day etc;
  - research into the effectiveness of our fire safety advertising;
  - other survey and consultation work to check public awareness of fire safety issues, ownership of smoke detectors etc;
  - information from our library of data on actual fires about the effects of actual fires we have attended, which is used to inform research into the pattern of deaths and injuries from fires (by property type, time of day, location, and a number of other factors);
  - information about the non-fire emergencies we attend (though, pending the promised legislation to give us a specific role in these emergencies, we have undertaken relatively little analysis of this information);
  - information about fire spread in different types of property;
  - information about the number of fire engines and other specialist vehicles we send to different incidents and how quickly they arrive;
  - information about the incidence of deliberate fire setting;
  - information about the number and pattern of false alarms; both those caused deliberately and those resulting from automatic fire detection and suppression equipment;
  - information about relative levels of deprivation.
81. Analysis of this information enables us to draw a number of conclusions about the patterns of risk across London, and about the effectiveness of our activities in making the public safer. We have prepared a profile of the risks in each of the 32 London boroughs and the City of London. These profiles were attached to the draft version of this plan, and are now available on our website at [www.london-fire.gov.uk/saferlondon](http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/saferlondon). These profiles provide a brief description of the particular characteristics of each borough, and an analysis of the risks which we respond to through both fire safety enforcement work and the incidents we attend. However as we plan and deliver our services on a strategic, London-wide basis, we do not list separately the initiatives and changes which will impact on any particular borough.
82. To make sure that we can continue to develop an integrated risk-based approach we will need to improve the way in which we collect, analyse and interpret information about risk. We will therefore continue to develop our computer systems to improve how we collect data, and our ability to correlate and analyse different data about the same buildings (for example, information from fire safety enforcement, visits by local fire stations or about incidents in that building). In doing so we will seek to join together with other agencies across London (such as the GLA, the London boroughs, the other emergency services, the insurance industry) so that we can share data (within the constraints of data protection legislation) and develop a common understanding about risks

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across London and the ways in which we can work together to reduce those risks.

83. This will be made easier when our new mobilising system comes into service early in 2004, at a new control centre in east London. This system, based on geographical information systems, will improve the information we collect automatically about the incidents we attend, and we will be able to share that information much more easily with the other management information systems we operate.
84. We will be an active participant in a national project to e-enable planning and regulatory services. The aim of the project is to make use of IT systems to provide readily accessible information to householders, small businesses, larger developers and the local community about the range of planning and regulatory services.
85. We are also taking an active role in delivering a fire service national e-government project. This is designed to address four areas:
- **risk knowledge management and data sharing** – to support the development and implementation of integrated risk management across the fire service;
  - **fire safety in the community** – providing opportunities for householders and home owners to access information and advice themselves about fire safety matters like undertaking a home fire risk assessment, requesting a free smoke alarm for someone in need, buying fire safety equipment. It will also facilitate opportunities for booking various community fire safety services provided by local fire brigades (such as schools visits, visits by fire station staff etc); and make available for schools and teachers attractive and innovative learning materials;
  - **fire safety and business** – this will e-enable our interactions with business to enforce fire safety in their buildings, reflecting the new enforcement regime which is expected to be in place shortly. It will also speed up the

processes for consulting with other agencies (such as local authorities) on fire safety issues;

- **firefighter recruitment** – providing a single access point for anybody interested in joining the fire and rescue service and providing information about the service as a career.

86. The research which has been carried out to date into the factors which increase risks from fire, suggests a very complex relationship between factors such as age, socio-economic status, social exclusion, drug and alcohol abuse. A number of these factors seem to be linked to increased risk from fire, but causal links are not so clear (for example, are elderly people more at risk because of their age, or because they are more likely to live on a limited income, or from a mixture of the two?). We therefore intend to work with the government, the academic world (and in co-operation with other fire authorities across the country) to:

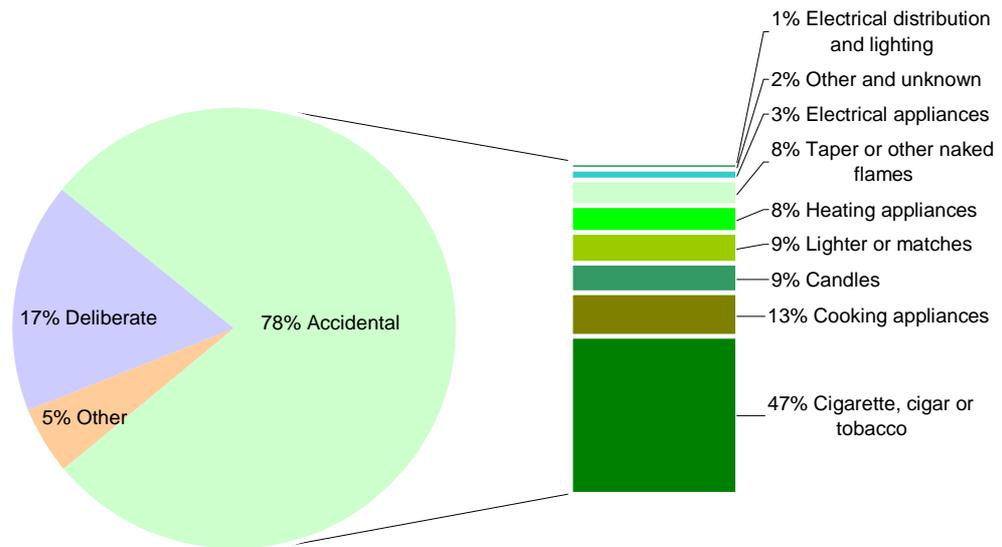
- bring together any research which may have been done around the world into those factors which increase or reduce risks from fire, and the effectiveness of different methods to seek to reduce those risks;
- commission additional research, where this would be helpful to improve our understanding of the complex nature of the causes of fire, and the different risks to which people are exposed if and when fire does break out.

## What we know about risks in London

### Fire deaths

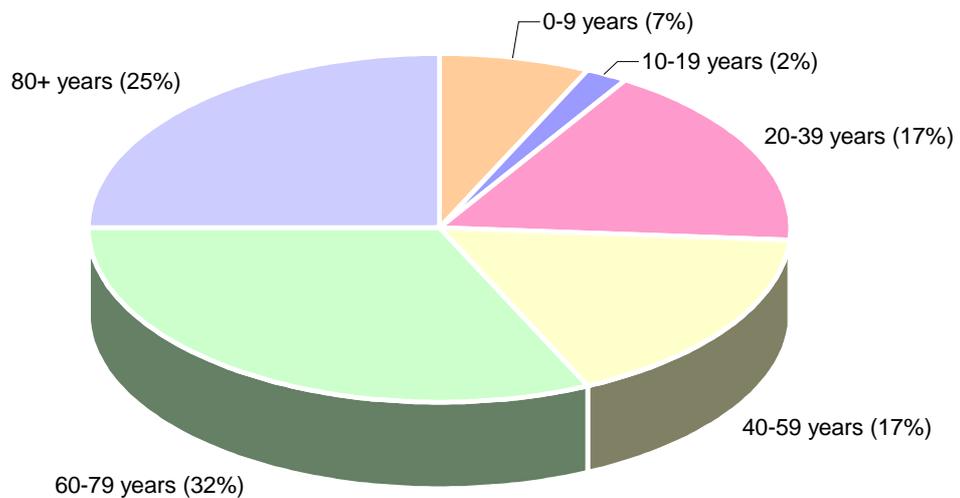
87. In 2001, we published a report about fire deaths in London between 1996 and 2000. That report found that:
- over 400 people died from fire during this period, though the trend has shown a gradual reduction in the number of deaths;
  - over 85 per cent of recorded deaths occur in the home, with 10 per cent happening in other buildings (such as workplaces, hotels or night

### Percentage breakdown of accidental fires

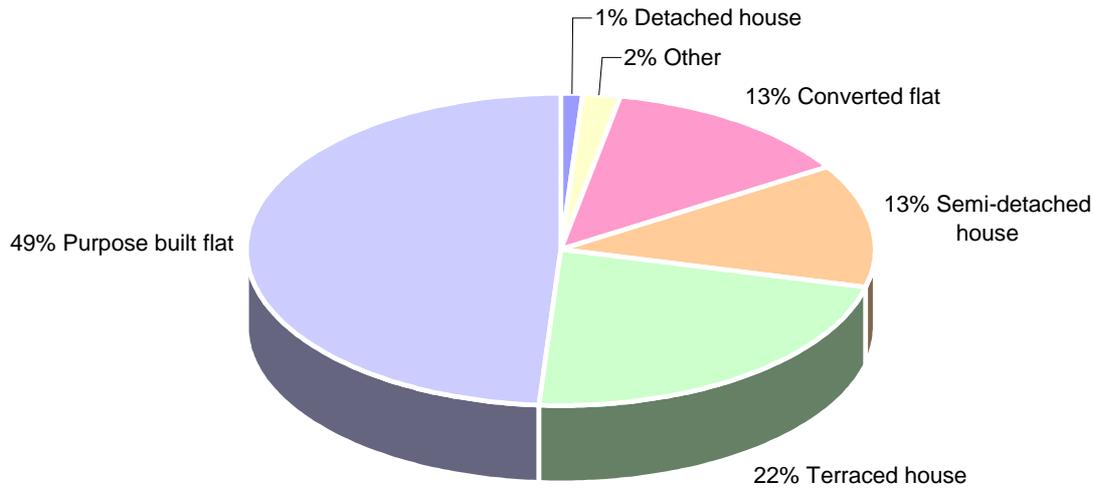


- clubs) and the remaining 5 per cent in vehicles (these tended to be suicides);
- most of these deaths in the home (78 per cent) were accidental;
- of these accidental deaths nearly half were due to smoking cigarettes or other forms of tobacco;
- cooking appliances and candles were the cause of a further 13 per cent of these accidental deaths;
- over a half (57 per cent) of people who died in a fire were aged 60 or over, and death rates are significantly higher for people over 80 than for any other age group;
- however only 9 per cent of deaths were among children or young people aged under 20;
- nearly a half of fire deaths occurred in purpose built flats;
- a further 13 per cent occurred in converted flats;

### Fire deaths by age group



### Accidental fire deaths in dwellings

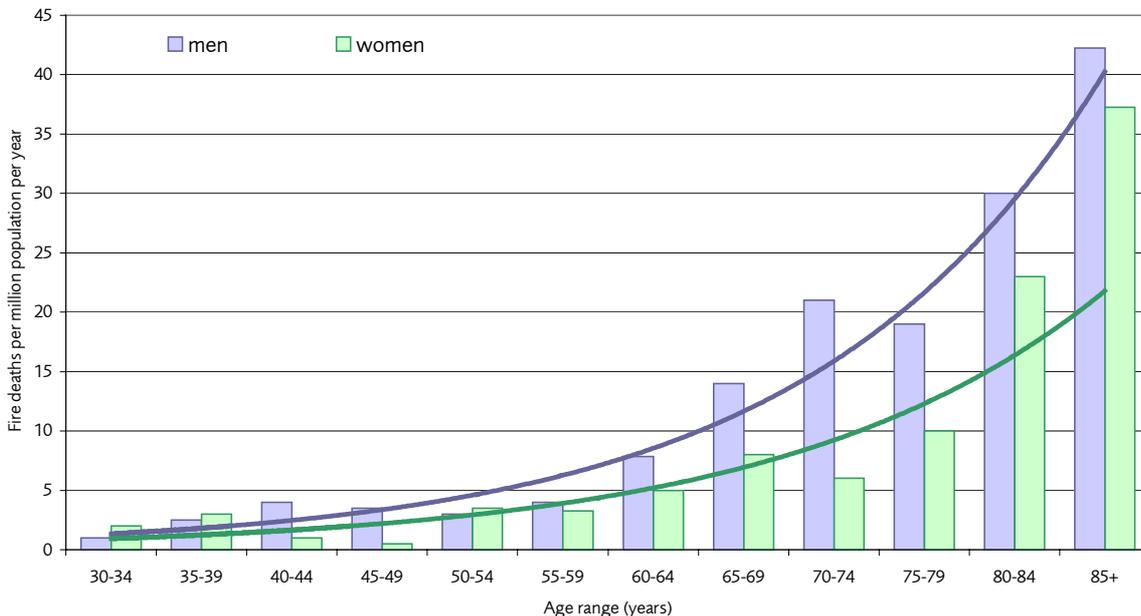


- the higher risks from fire in flats (both converted and purpose-built) compared with other dwelling types is shown even more sharply when looking at annual death rates for different types of dwelling.

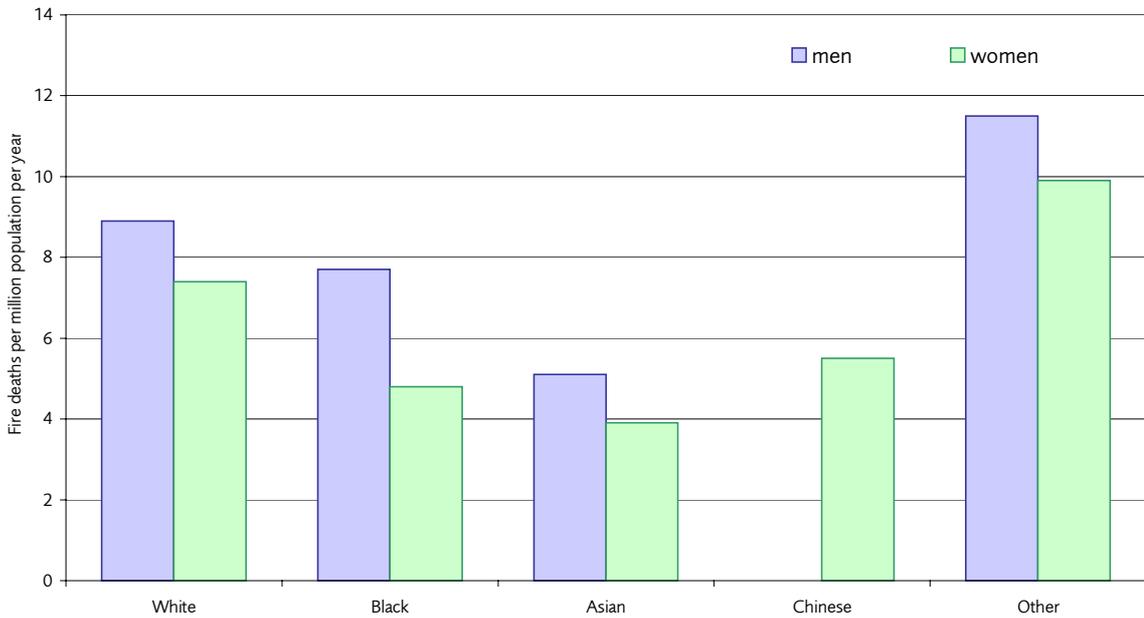
Dwelling type	Annual fire death rate per 100,000 dwelling a year
Purpose-built flats	2.67
Converted flats	1.89
Semi-detached houses	1.52
Terraced houses	1.43
Detached houses	0.54

- men are at greater risk from accidental fires in the home than women in most age groups;
- people who die in unusual circumstances, including most fire victims, are tested for alcohol in their bloodstream. Of those tested, 29 per cent had some alcohol in their bloodstream, and 23 per cent had enough to exceed the limit for driving;
- the study suggests a possible link between high levels of alcohol in the blood and fire deaths due to smoking materials;

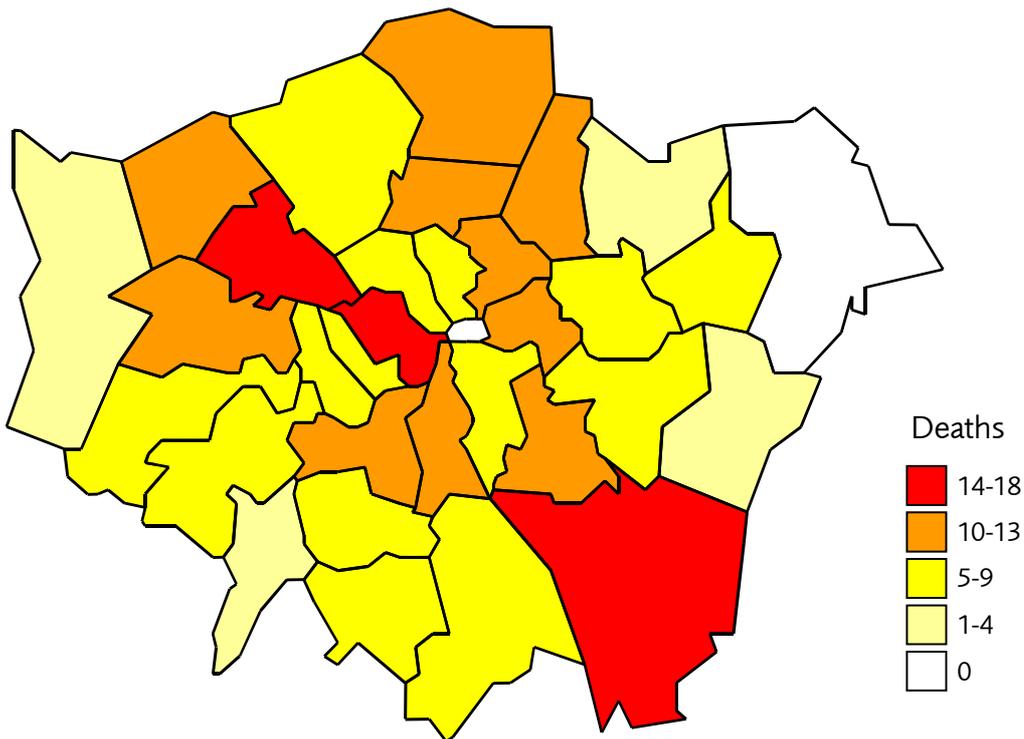
### Fire deaths by age



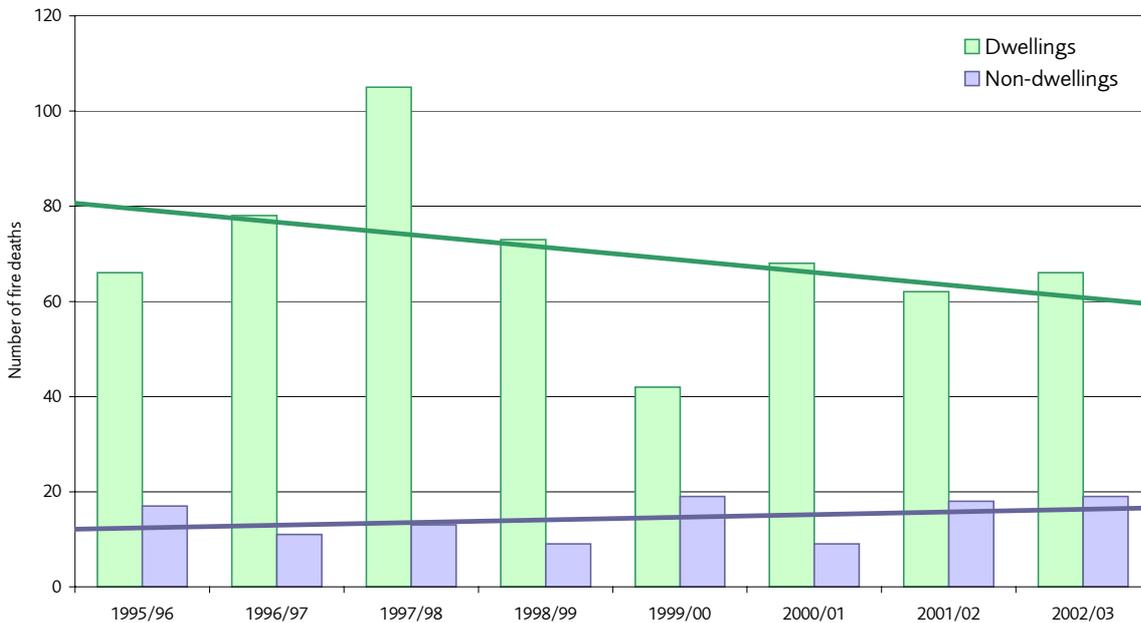
Fire deaths by ethnicity



- there is little evidence to suggest that death rates from accidental fire deaths in the home vary between people from different ethnic backgrounds;
- in about one third of accidental deaths in the home the person either lived alone or was alone at the time the fire broke out;
- over 20 per cent of people dying in their home had some form of disability;
- the pattern of accidental fire deaths in the home across London is shown below. However it should be noted that as the number of such deaths remains low one or two incidents can distort this picture. For example since 2000 there have been a number of fire deaths in Havering.

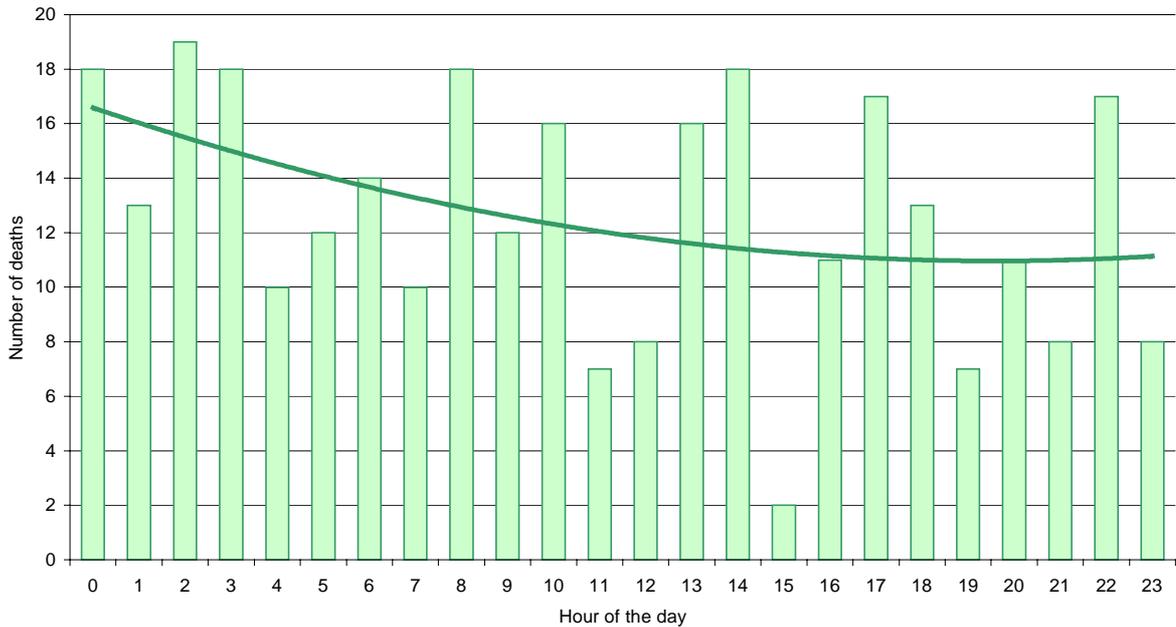


### Fire deaths in dwellings and non-dwellings



- more deaths happen in the winter months than in the summer months, with a peak in January and a trough in June;
  - no smoke alarm was fitted in the homes of 77 per cent of the people who died from fire, and in a further 5 per cent while an alarm was fitted it was not working because the battery was either missing or flat. As only 18 per cent of those who died from fire had a working smoke alarm this confirms that such alarms can provide early detection of fire and allow people the opportunity to escape safely.
88. In summary, this study tells us that those people most at risk from fire are:
- older people;
  - living in less well off neighbourhoods (with higher concentrations of social or other rented housing);
  - may have alcohol or drugs problems
  - may have some difficulty in leaving the scene of a fire quickly, for example people with a disability affecting mobility.
89. We have used this information about those most at risk from fire to help target our community fire safety work. In recent years we have seen a downward trend in the number of people dying from fires in the home, though sadly there has been an increase in the much smaller numbers dying outside the home.
90. We have also looked at the time of day when fire deaths occur. This shows that the risk of dying from fire is higher in the small hours of the morning than at other times of the day, which is consistent with the conclusion that people are most at risk of dying from fire when at home in bed.

**Fire deaths by time of day (April 1999 - March 2003)**



**Injuries**

- 91. We have analysed the number of injuries sustained by people at fires we have attended, by the property risk category of the area in which those fires occurred. This risk category reflects the current national recommended standards of fire cover, which have remained largely unchanged since the 1930s, and largely focus on risk to property.
- 92. The current map showing the risk categorisation across London which we use to mobilise our emergency response is shown at Appendix E. It is based on a broad categorisation of risk in sizeable areas (at least one square kilometre) based on the predominating property type in that area. As it applies to London, this risk is categorised into four different risk types, which can be summarised as follows:

**A risk:** main shopping and business centres, concentrations of entertainment centres such as cinemas, theatres or clubs or of high risk industrial or commercial centres. In London these are mainly the areas around the City and the

West End, and comprise some 2 per cent of the total area of Greater London;

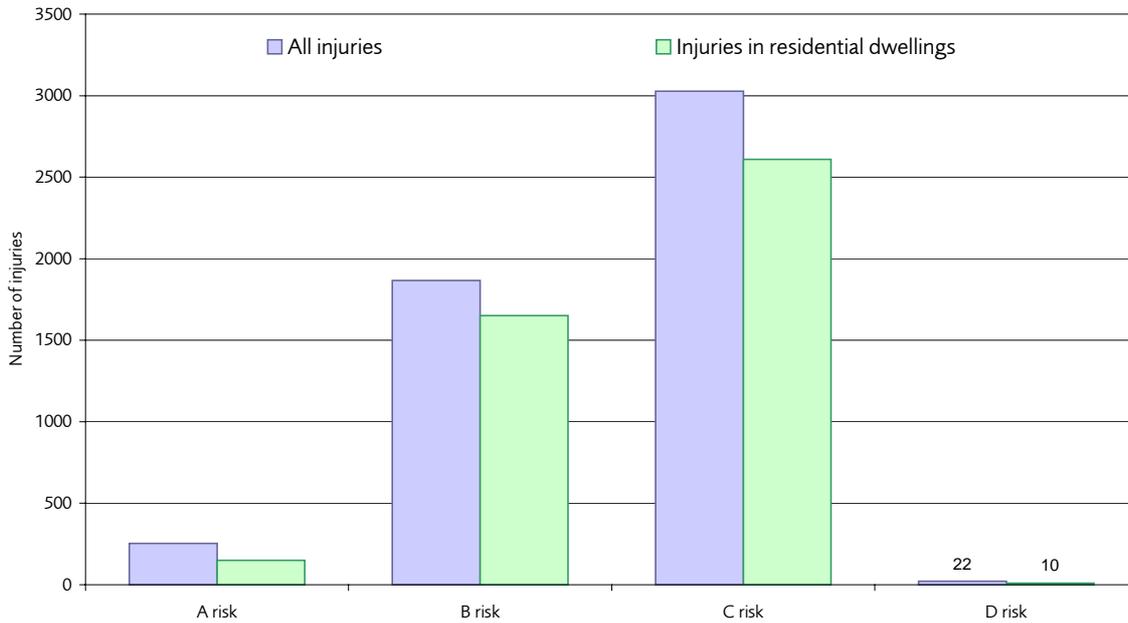
**B risk:** these areas are continuously built-up areas with concentrations of multi-storey shopping and business areas, hotels and leisure facilities, older multi-storey housing and industrial or trading estates containing some higher risk occupancies. twelve per cent of London is categorised as B risk, which is located mainly in the inner suburbs.

**C risk:** these are normally suburban areas comprising mainly residential accommodation, including multi-storey housing or houses in multiple occupation. Most of London is categorised as C risk (69 per cent of the area) covering the areas outside the city and the inner suburbs.

**D risk:** these are the areas not covered by A, B or C risk categories. They comprise some 17 per cent of London's area, mainly in the less developed areas on the edges of London.

- 93. As shown below, the large majority of these injuries (particularly in B risk areas) happen in people's homes.

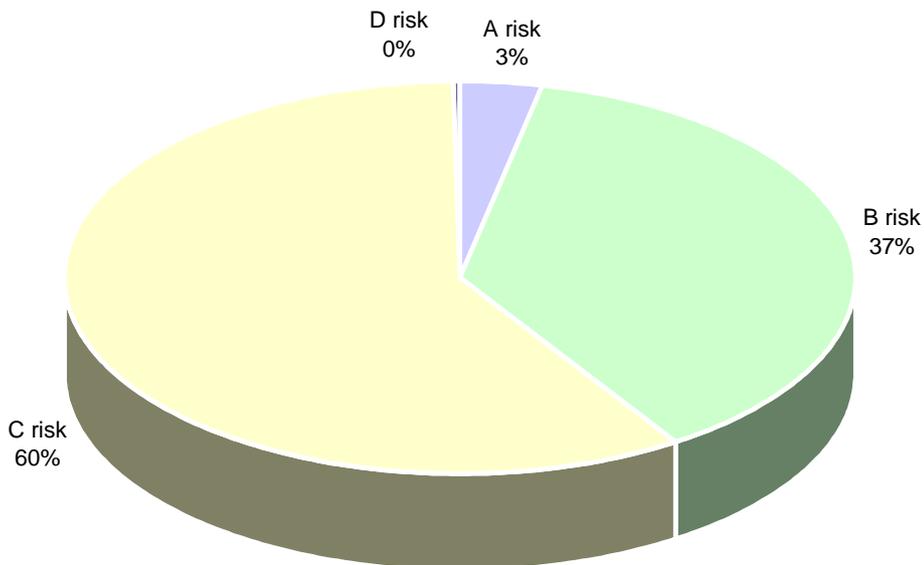
**Injuries from fire (April 1999 to March 2003)**



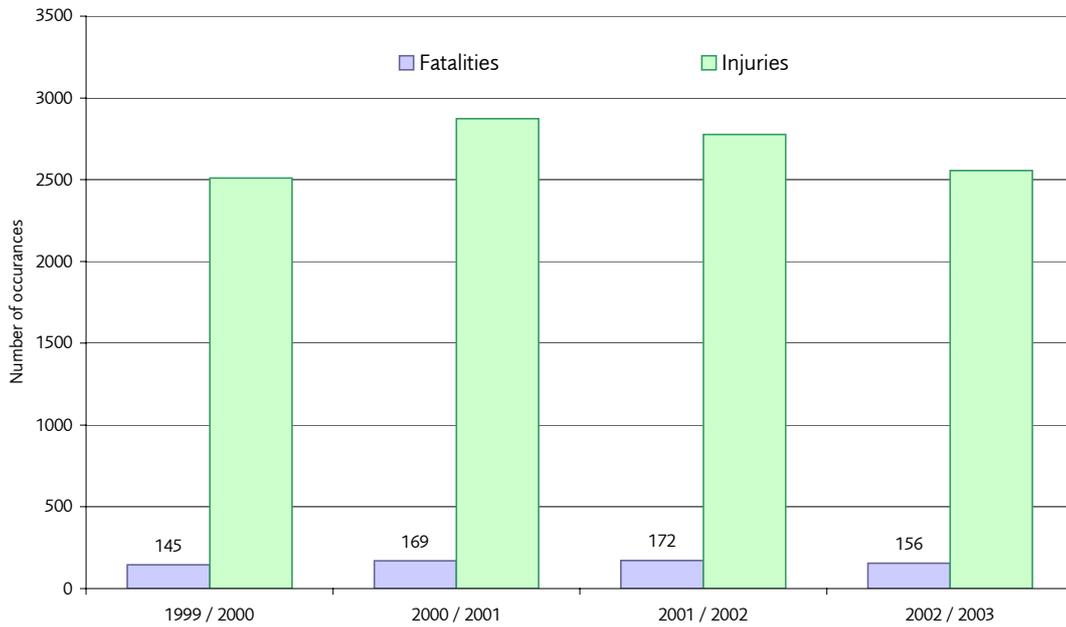
94. The proportion of injuries caused by fires in people's homes, by the risk category of the area in which they happened is as follows:-

95. This shows that there is a much higher level of injuries in B risk areas (37 per cent of the total) than you would expect from the total area of London falling into this risk category (only 12 per cent).

**Injuries in residential dwelling fires by risk category (April 1999 to March 2003)**



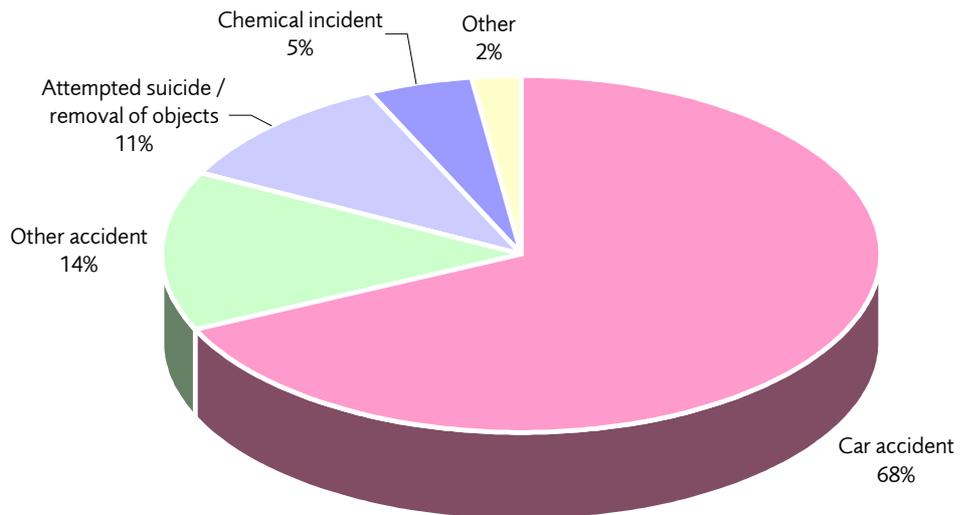
**Fatalities and injuries at special services**



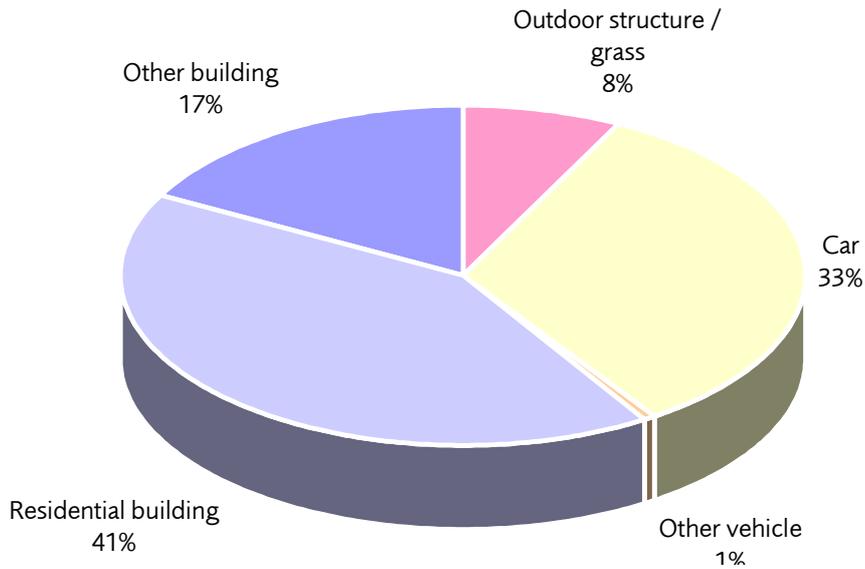
96. As well as fires, we attend a number of other incidents (known as special services). The pattern of deaths and injuries at those incidents we attend is shown below.

97. We have also looked at the causes of injuries at incidents other than fires which we attend.

**Causes of injuries at special services (April 1999 to March 2003)**



**Types of fire (April 1999 to March 2003)**



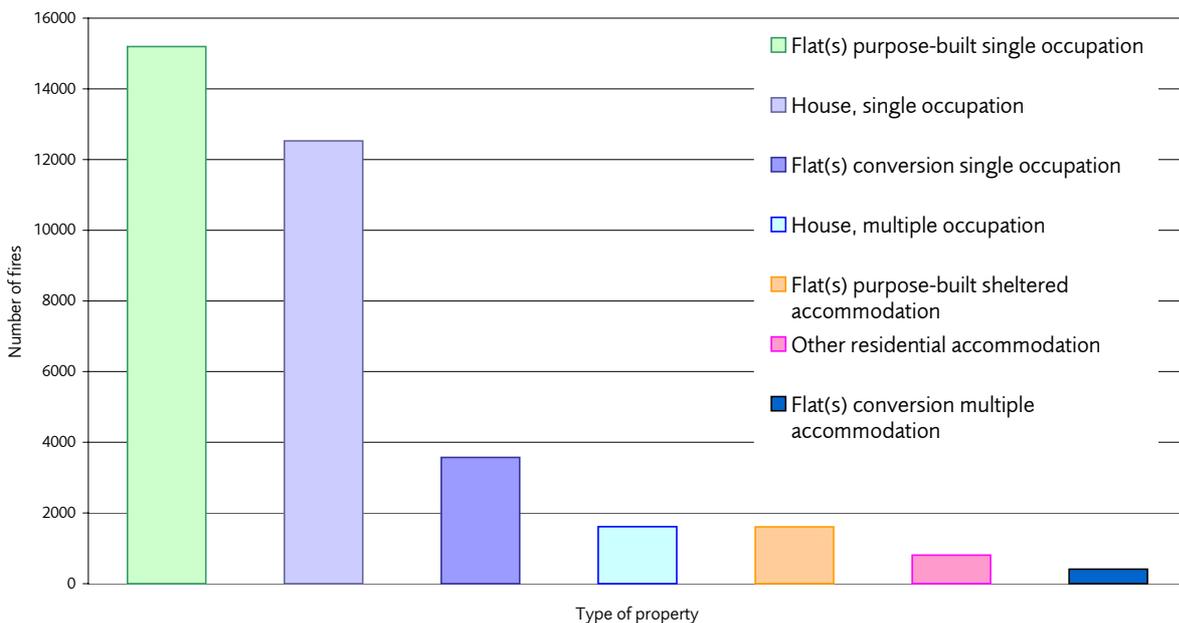
**Fires**

- 98. The overall number of fires (while subject to some change from year to year) has remained at about the same level (around 50,000 a year) for a number of years. The same is true for all property fires (running at around 20,000 a year).
- 99. These are broken down as follows:
- 100. The number of grass fires is subject to considerable fluctuations from year to year – with a big increase in such fires during hot dry summers (like this year). The numbers have

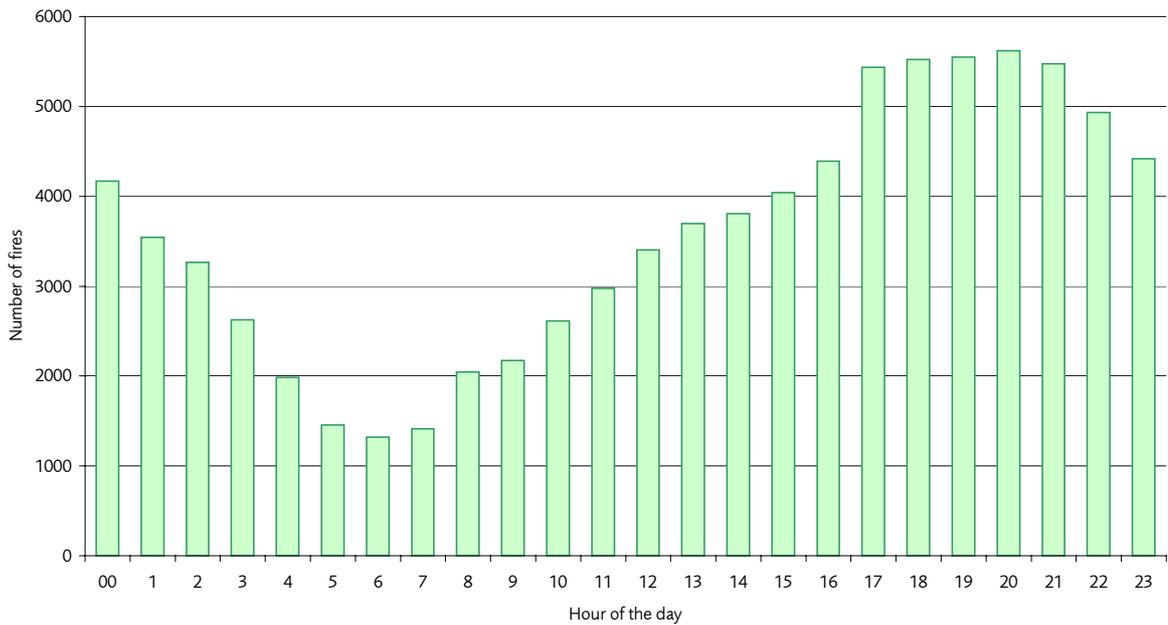
varied in recent years from below 4,000 to over 6,000, though the risk of death or injuries from these fires is very low in London.

- 101. Fires in abandoned cars have become an increasing problem in recent years, rising from just under 2,000 in 2000/01 to more than 5,000 in 2001/02. As a result, work to remove abandoned cars from the streets (which are often set alight if left there) has been given a much higher priority by local authorities and we have worked together with many of the boroughs to tackle this problem. It is therefore encouraging

**Fires in residential property (April 1999 to March 2003)**



Number of fires by time of day (April 1999 to March 2003)



that the number of such fires reduced in 2003/03 to below 4,300 and we will continue our work, in partnership with others, to reduce further the number of these fires.

- 102. However the table above shows that approaching 50 per cent of fires occur in people's homes. We have therefore also broken down these residential fires, by the type of property in which they happen.
- 103. We have seen significant success in reducing the number of fires in dwellings (the main focus of our community fire safety work) over the last four years. These have gone down each year, from a total of over 9,500 in 1999/2000 to under 8,600 last year.
- 104. In future we will continue to focus our activities, and our targets, on reducing the number of property fires, and in particular the number of accidental fires in dwellings.
- 105. We have also looked at the time of day when fires break out.
- 106. This shows the pattern of a steady rise in the number of fires during the day, peaking in the

evening, followed by a steady decline until first thing in the morning.

**Arson**

- 107. Arson is currently the largest single cause of fire in the country. Our arson reduction strategy identifies that in London some 36 per cent of fires are thought to be started deliberately. While this is slightly lower than the proportion nationally (46 per cent) arson remains a major problem in London, causing loss of life, injury and significant economic loss and environmental damage. Arson attacks on homes, arson in schools and the thousands of small arson fires each year have a huge cost in terms of human suffering, and reduction in quality of life, quite apart from their direct economic impact.
- 108. Arson is a complex issue, with a variety of causes such as vandalism, playing with fire, crime concealment, revenge, fraud and mental illness.
- 109. Over the last decade the number of fires believed to be caused by arson has doubled, both nationally and in London. This is why our prevention activities include work targeted at reducing arson and working with young fire

setters to help them realise the damage and distress they cause and to stop this antisocial behaviour.

**False alarms**

110. We continue to receive many more false alarms than we do calls to actual fires. As we encourage people to call us out whenever they suspect that there may be a fire, false alarms which are made with good intent are not considered to be a problem.

111. However the number of false alarms which are made maliciously, or are caused by automatic fire detection equipment, remain a cause for concern.

112. The trends in these false alarms are shown below:

113. We have worked hard to reduce the number of malicious false alarms in recent years, for example by putting in place agreements with mobile phone companies to disconnect phones used to make repeated malicious false alarms. The reduction in this type of false alarms is therefore encouraging.

114. The steady, and sharp, rise in false alarms caused by automatic fire alarms remains a cause for concern. This increase partly reflects the sheer

growth in the number of such installations fitted, as we continue to recommend (and in buildings subject to fire certification we may require) that they be fitted.

115. Nonetheless they cause a drain on our resources, which could be used more productively elsewhere. Our plan therefore makes proposals to change the way in which we respond to these alarms (see the section starting at paragraph 2.05)

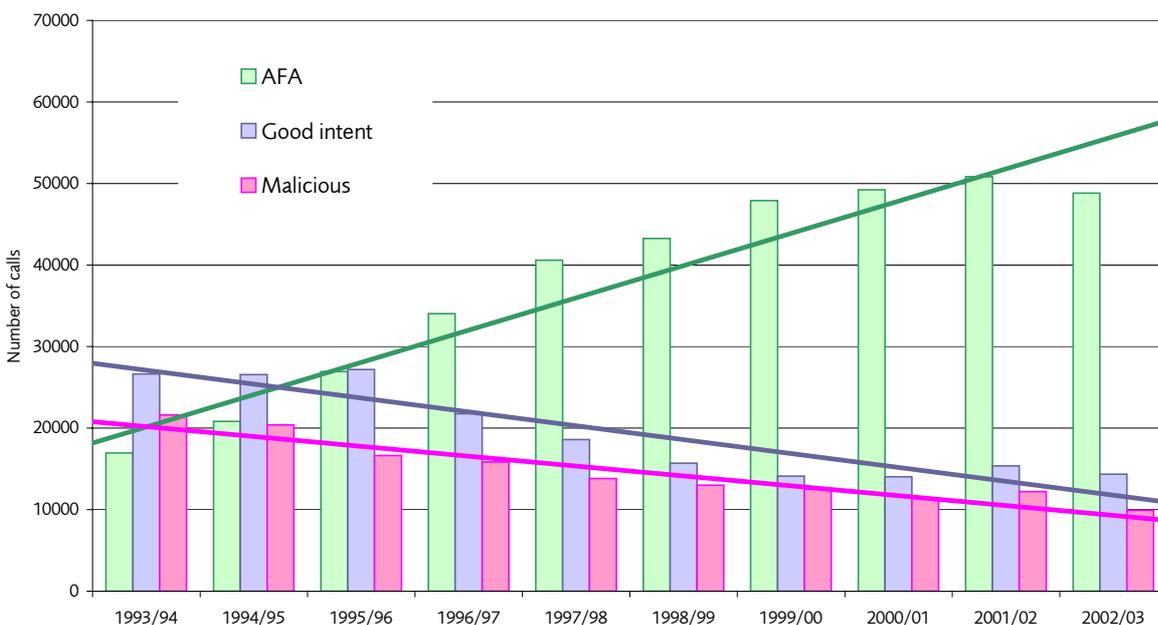
**Emergencies not involving any risk of fire (special services)**

116. There is a wide range of different types of such incident which we attend. These are described in more detail in Appendix B, which also shows the number of each type of special service we have provided over the last four years.

117. Overall, the number of non-fire incidents we attend has remained fairly constant over the last few years, averaging around 50,000 per year. This is about the same as both the number of fires attended, and the number of false alarms caused by automatic equipment.

118. Nearly 80 per cent of these incidents reflect just five (of the 27) different types of services we do. These are:

**Cause of false alarms**



- releasing people shut in lifts;
- flooding;
- road traffic accidents;
- people locked out of buildings;
- making buildings etc safe.

119. Releasing people shut in lifts represents by far the biggest share; around 37 per cent of the total special services.

120. This pattern of special services is unique to London, with incidents like road traffic accidents forming the bulk of special services elsewhere in the country.

### Progress towards achieving our headline targets

121. In 2000 we set ourselves some challenging targets to reduce by **20 per cent over 5 years** (that is by April 2005):

- the number of fires;
- the number of deaths caused by fire;
- the number of injuries caused by fire;
- the number of false alarms caused by automatic fire alarms (in non-domestic properties) and the number of hoax calls.

### Reducing the number of fires

122. Overall the rolling five-year average for the number of fires has only reduced slightly (by 2 per cent) over the last three years: from 49,300 when the targets were set, to 48,450 by the end of 2002/03. However, a more detailed breakdown of these figures does provide some more encouraging news. There has been a steady reduction in the number of accidental fires in dwellings in every year since our targets were set (from 8,340 in 1999/2000 to nearly 8,000 in 2002/03). Not only is this a headline reduction of over 10 per cent in this type of fire in just three years, but there is a steady year on year reduction which indicates a clear and sustained underlying trend.

123. This is particularly encouraging since the focus of our community fire safety and education work has been on reducing the number of accidental fires in people's homes.

### Reducing the number of deaths from fire

124. The actual number of deaths each year remains, thankfully, quite low (under 100 a year) and over the last three years the five year rolling average for the number of people, being killed by fire has reduced by over 10 per cent (from 86 to 77). This indicates that progress is being made in reducing the number of fire deaths.

125. The position is more encouraging when we look at deaths from fires in people's homes (as indicated above this is the focus of our community fire safety work). Here, there has been a 14 per cent reduction in the five-year rolling average over the last three years (from 72 to 62 deaths a year).

### Injuries from fire

126. This shows a similar picture to that for fire deaths. The headline figure shows a reduction in the five-year rolling average of just under 10 per cent over the last three years (from an average of nearly 1,600 injuries a year to one just under 1,500).

127. However, when we focus on injuries from fires in people's homes, the position is very encouraging, with a reduction of just over our 20 per cent target in only three years (from a rolling average of 1,250 in 2000, to just under 1,000 last year).

### False alarms

128. We have focused on false alarms caused by automatic fire alarms in buildings other than people's homes. Automatic alarms in people's homes are usually smoke detectors and we encourage all householders to install smoke detectors and to keep them working. When they go off, if people have any reason to believe there may actually be a fire, we also encourage them to leave their homes and call out the fire brigade.

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The recorded increase in the number of such calls is therefore a welcome sign that our community fire safety messages are being heard.

129. When looking at false alarms caused by automatic equipment outside people's homes, we have seen a disappointing 12 per cent rise in their number (the rolling average increasing from nearly 27,000 a year in 2000 to 30,000 last year).
130. While this may be partly caused by the increase in the number of such alarms fitted across London (in line with our advice and as required by us for some buildings needing a fire certificate) these figures not only remain disappointing but represent a significant waste of our resources. A key priority for the proposals in this plan has been to reduce the number of these calls, and to tailor our response to the risks they actually pose.
131. A much more encouraging picture is seen when we look at the number of malicious false alarms (these are calls made by people who know that there is no fire). These have reduced by 17 per cent over the last three years (from a rolling average of over 14,100 in 2000 to below 11,750 last year). There has also been a steady year on year reduction in the number of these malicious calls, which shows that there is a steady and sustained reduction. This means that we are well on track to meet, and probably exceed, our target for a 20 per cent reduction by 2005.
132. This reflects considerable effort we have placed into a range of initiatives over the last few years to tackle this antisocial behaviour and this plan sets out our proposals to sustain this effort.

### **Our performance compared with other metropolitan fire authorities**

133. Appendix B sets out how well London's fire and rescue service performed compared with the other six metropolitan fire authorities (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne & Wear, West Midlands, and West Yorkshire against the main best value indicators for the fire service in 2002/03).
134. This shows that we were the best performing authority among the metropolitan brigades for:
- the lowest number of calls to fires (excluding false alarms) per thousand population;
  - the lowest number of primary fires (i.e. property fires) per thousand population;
  - the highest percentage of Black and minority ethnic firefighters.
135. We also performed well in comparison to other brigades in relation to:
- percentage of fires at which the number of fire engines met the standards of fire cover;
  - accidental fires in dwellings per thousand population;
  - numbers of deaths arising from accidental fires in dwellings per thousand population;
  - number of calls to malicious false alarms per thousand population.
136. Our comparative performance is less encouraging in relation to other indicators:
- *percentage of citizens very or fairly satisfied with the overall service*: however this figure still compares very well with that for other public services in London;
  - *working days/shifts lost to sickness absence*: this problem has been recognised and we have set demanding targets for reducing sickness absence supported by an absence control policy;
  - *ill-health retirements as a percentage of total workforce*: we have made substantial progress in reducing these figures in recent years though, as these figures show, there is still scope for further improvement;
  - *percentage of calls at which (a) the number of crew and (b) the attendance times met the recommended standards of fire cover*: the government has already announced its intention to withdraw these standards as they are not compatible with the integrated risk-based approach. However our figures show

that the first fire engine will arrive at 90 per cent of fires within eight minutes of it being sent, and 95 per cent of fires within nine minutes;

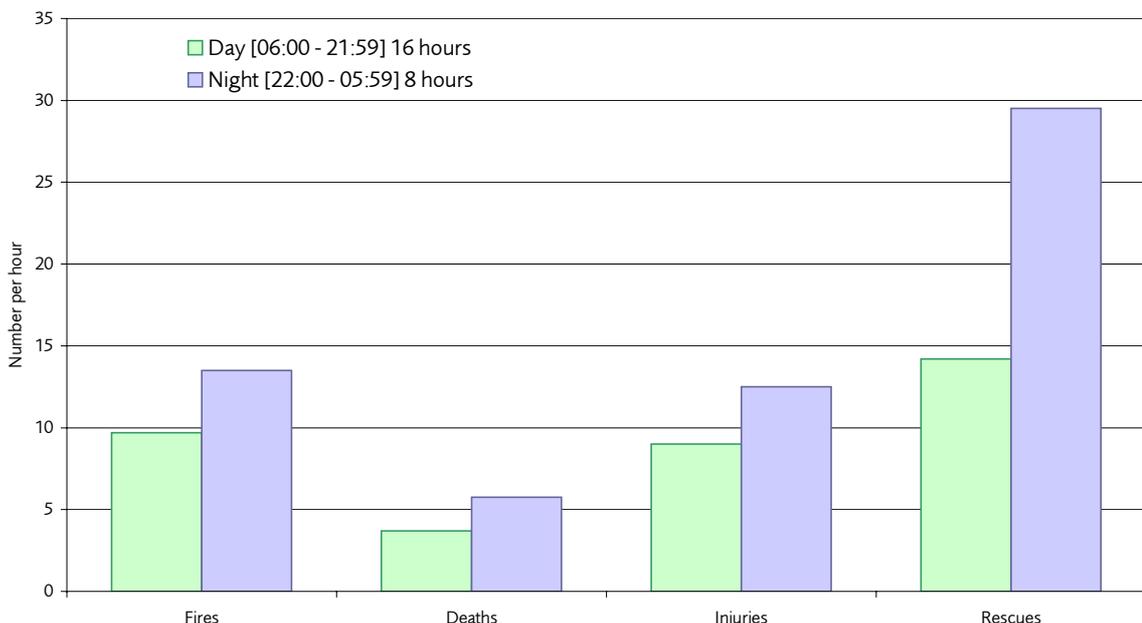
- *average time taken to issue fire certificates*: the number of certificates which we process, and the complexity of some large developments (for example, large office and shopping complexes, major hospitals, major transport terminals) inevitably impact on our performance. However we recently completed a best value review in this area which identified a number of proposals to improve our performance. However as the requirement to continue issuing fire certificates is likely to be removed once regulatory reform of fire safety legislation takes place, we will move towards measuring our achievement of a risk-based reinspection programme for all those buildings for which we have enforcement responsibilities.

137. We have not been able to compare our performance in dealing with non-fire incidents with that of other fire authorities, because up to now fire authorities have not been required to collect and publish such information on a consistent basis.

### Other work to look at our effectiveness

138. We have also carried out a more detailed look at a selection of fires where people died, were injured, were rescued by the Brigade to see what we could learn about the effectiveness of our response.
139. This analysis confirmed the picture that the most dangerous period, in terms of fires breaking out, and for risk of death, injury or needing to be rescued from fire is in the small hours of the morning, with higher figures across the board for the eight hours between ten o'clock at night and six o'clock in the morning than for the other sixteen hours put together.
140. We were called to more fires involving fatalities or injuries (12 per cent of the total), and there were more deaths (21 per cent) and rescues (36 per cent) during the two-hour period between two and four o'clock in the morning than during any other two-hour period. For injuries, the peak two-hour period was between midnight and two o'clock in the morning (19 per cent of the total).
141. This underlines the importance of fitting fire safety measures such as smoke alarms or, where appropriate, sprinklers; which can alert people quickly when a fire breaks out, and contain the spread of that fire so that people have a greater opportunity to leave safely.

Day and night comparison



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142. However it also underlines the difficulty with the current standards of fire cover in that the fastest, greatest response is **not** sent to those areas of London where we have seen the greatest risk of death or injury from fire. The highest risks are faced by people at home and in bed, mainly in the inner areas of London with high concentrations of social housing and housing in multiple occupation. These areas tend to be categorised as B or C risk under the current standards of fire cover (fires in B risk areas attracting one fire engine in five minutes and a second in eight, with those in C risk areas receiving one in eight to ten minutes). More demanding standards are in place for A risk areas, despite the fact that the risks result in fewer deaths or injuries.
143. This analysis has been based on a relatively small sample of fires, and so is not robust enough to support proposals now to change the current attendance standards.
144. The link between number of deaths and injuries and the speed of our response is more difficult to examine, because on many occasions the fire may have been alight for some time before we are called out, and in some cases people may have died before we are called out to the fire. Once again this underlines the importance of fire safety precautions.
145. This initial piece of work does point up areas where further research is needed into (a) the links between the number of fire engines we send and how quickly we arrive and our ability to reduce deaths and injuries and maximise rescues and (b) the extent to which better preventative measures – such as smoke alarms and sprinklers may have a greater impact on reducing deaths and injuries than maintaining or increasing the speed of our emergency response.
146. It also highlights the need to collect better information about the number of people who rescue themselves, are rescued by us or are rescued by other agencies at different types of incident. This will enable us in the future to look more closely at how we can work with others to help ensure that people in danger can be rescued quickly and safely.
147. We will carry out this research, in collaboration with other agencies where possible, to inform our London Safety Plan in future years.

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## Part 3

### Our plans to improve safety in London

#### A gradual approach

148. This part of the plan deals with how we intend to improve safety across London, building on our information and experience as described in this plan. Wholesale change will not happen overnight and we will phase our improvements over a number of years; learning from our efforts to improve community safety before we make major changes to the way in which we plan and deliver our emergency response.
149. At the heart of our future plans is the principle that **prevention is better than cure**. The practical effect of this approach in the longer term will be to develop more effective use of our resources in relatively well-protected areas, where there may no longer be a need to send as many fire engines or specialist vehicles to an incident as we do at the moment. These areas would include those in central London which attract the highest risk categorisation under the current standards of fire cover, and therefore also receive the fastest, greatest weight of response to incidents, but where many properties are fitted with automatic fire detection and suppression equipment. This would enable us to provide additional protection in areas currently less well protected, but where there is a greater risk of injury or life loss. Our arrangements in the future will also reflect the fact that risks vary at different times of the day or night as people move around the city, from home, to work or education, to leisure activities and back home again.
150. We accept there may be some public concern about significant changes in the pattern of emergency cover and so our plans have been phased to demonstrate the benefits which can be gained from more proactive, and better targeted, preventative work before major changes are made to our emergency response. We are therefore making no proposals in this plan to reduce either the number of fire stations or fire engines kept ready to respond to emergencies, or the current target times for our first fire engine to arrive at a reported fire.
151. However, we know that often we send vehicles and their crews to incidents where they are not actually used once they arrive. Our first plan therefore proposes ways in which we can reduce these unwanted and unnecessary appliance movements. These actually increase some aspects of public risk because of the dangers inherent in driving large, heavy vehicles through London's streets at speed when responding to an emergency call. They also reduce our ability to respond to any other incident which may arise before that vehicle gets back to its fire station.
152. Most of these initiatives will be delivered by making better use of our trained and professional firefighters based at our fire stations, which we will re-style as fire and community safety centres. This will provide more varied, interesting and satisfying work for our staff, while also enabling us to deliver real improvements in community safety at a reasonable cost. Additional time will be released at fire stations to enable firefighters to carry out this work, through other elements of our plan. Firefighters will engage with their local community to improve their safety, with support from specialist resources such as community safety engagement and schools teams, and in partnership with a range of other agencies.
153. Development of the plan has also taken account of the human resources implications, for example in training our staff to develop the new skills they will need to implement our proposed service improvements. We are not proposing any change to the current working patterns for our staff as part of this first plan. However over the coming year we will be working closely with our

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staff, and their representative bodies, to develop a range of simple, manageable, cost-effective options for flexible working arrangements that fit with the changing pattern of risk demands across London.

### Core principles used to develop this plan

154. The following core principles have been adopted when developing the proposals in this plan:

- the combined effect of all the measures in our plan will be to make London a safer city;
- individual changes will not significantly increase risks to the community, and where possible will demonstrably improve community safety;
- we must retain an effective, resilient and safe emergency response to calls for assistance;
- while aiming to reduce life loss and injury, we will also do what we can to reduce property and environmental damage, and to protect our heritage, to preserve business continuity and support the local economy;
- we will develop a more flexible service – one which can respond to changing patterns of risk across London at different times of the day, week, or year;
- resilience to handle major and prolonged incidents (including possible major acts of terrorism) must be developed and maintained;
- we recognise that provision of support and advice after an incident and reducing avoidable economic loss and preserving business continuity are important to Londoners;
- as and when the legislative framework allows, the Authority would wish to take a more proactive approach to preventing life loss and injury from those non-fire emergencies where it can make a real difference;
- we will reinvest those resources which are not currently used effectively or efficiently to help reduce risk and improve community safety;

- we will do what we can to involve a wide range of stakeholders, and the public, in decisions about how we intend to organise and prioritise use of our resources;
- our services will continue to reflect the differing needs of London's diverse communities;
- we will continue to maintain effective arrangements for partnerships within London, and for cross border working with surrounding brigades;
- our emergency response arrangements must maintain safe systems of work for firefighters;
- we will continue to secure best value in all our activities.

### Proposals for reducing accidental fires in the home

155. Achieving a reduction in the number of fires in the home depends on making contact with the people who are most at risk, and then persuading them to take action to reduce the risks they are facing.

156. We will continue to run a programme of activities, including radio, television and press advertising, schools visits, talks to local communities, taking stands at local shopping centres or local events to promote three key messages:

- **prevention:** how to stop a fire happening in the first place;
- **detection:** install a smoke alarm and make sure it is working (checking the batteries every six months);
- **escape:** develop an escape plan so that you and your family know what to do to escape safely if a fire breaks out in your home.

157. We will work with local boroughs, community groups and smoke alarm manufacturers and suppliers (who have supplied us with some smoke alarms free of charge) to continue and expand our programme to provide and install smoke alarms in the homes of people at higher

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risk from fire, notably older people. We already have £100,000 set aside in our budget to buy smoke detectors which can be supplied and fitted in the homes of those most at risk, which will be supported through continued efforts to secure sponsorship for the supply and installation of smoke detectors.

158. We will also maintain our campaign to lobby for:

- installation of hard-wired smoke alarms (so that they are working at all times and not dependent on batteries – which people often remove or fail to check);
- installation of sprinkler systems in new or refurbished buildings, where the risks justify it. Modern systems are reliable and rarely cause unwanted damage, but are very effective in limiting fire spread and fire damage.

159. This campaign will be directed at both government and at individual developers, to include domestic sprinklers in building regulations requirements for those new or refurbished buildings where the risk justifies it, for example in educational or some domestic buildings. We will also lobby to make sure domestic sprinklers are fitted in the major new developments now proposed by the government and London's Mayor in the Thames Gateway.

160. We will continue to develop local partnerships with agencies in the public, private and voluntary sector where these can help to promote the fire safety message. While gaining access to older people, in general, is not particularly difficult, there can be difficulties in contacting some older people at higher risk who usually remain more remote from society, possibly because of the fear of crime, mobility difficulties, or for other reasons. Joint working can help to improve access to these people. Examples of good practice include:

- *Merton* – government funding (nearly £40,000) has been secured to support a comprehensive home safety project to protect older and vulnerable people living in Merton;

- *Sutton* – over £30,000 has been secured through a Public Service Agreement, which will enable us to fix free smoke alarms in the homes of some 1,000 needy residents over the age of 55 in the next two years;

- we plan to work with the charity Help the Aged, providing them with smoke alarms and training their fitters to recognise fire hazards and effectively site smoke alarms. Their fitters would visit older people as part of the Handy Van scheme, and in addition to their other work would explain the hazards of fire in the home and show them how to maintain the smoke alarms;

- *Islington* – We have joined with the Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Unit, and Islington Health Services to set up the Islington Safe At Home project. This scheme is focused on carers of vulnerable groups such as older people, the disabled, and people with mental health problems – all of whom are known to be groups at particular risk from fire. Each of the partners helps to instruct carers in risk assessment, covering home fire safety, home security and awareness of the risk from bogus-callers, as well as health issues for housebound people. This helps carers to act as 'the eyes and ears' in the community and alert us when a particular fire safety related problem occurs.

161. These excellent local initiatives will be consolidated by a London-wide approach, identifying the highest priority groups for home visits and fire risk assessments. We will introduce a structured programme of such home visits by our station-based firefighters. This programme will include the following elements:

- we will introduce a more focused programme of home fire risk assessments. Firefighters will offer to carry out a fire risk assessment in people's homes, initially targeting older people living alone and areas of London with a history of fires in the home. A separate programme of fire safety inspections by specialist officers will be carried out for houses in multiple occupation which present particular risks.

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Where we find that no smoke alarm is fitted, our crews will offer to install one, or provide information about where to get hold of smoke alarm and how to install it. For those people who we assess to be most at risk we will consider installing a smoke alarm free of charge, seeking sponsorship to cover the cost of the alarms themselves. We will also build on a number of existing partnerships with local boroughs and the larger housing associations, to encourage the installation of smoke alarms in all social housing.

- in addition to targeting those areas we know to face particularly high risks from fire, we will offer home risk assessments to those people who have had a fire and their neighbours. This is an important initiative given the findings of the 2001 British Crime Survey which indicated that people who had suffered a fire in their home were more likely than the average to suffer a second fire within 12 months;
  - developing closer working relations with local community centres for older people, whereby watch officers from the local fire station will visit periodically to encourage and arrange home fire risk assessments and promote smoke alarm ownership and maintenance;
  - improving our arrangements to respond to requests for home fire safety advice and/or the installation of smoke alarms from individuals or partner agencies.
  - In addition, the Authority responds to consultations from borough councils in respect of houses in multiple occupation and carries out joint inspections upon request.
162. We will aim to develop a programme which carries out some 25,000 home risk assessments next year, targeted at those households at higher risk from fire, while recognising that we provide a service for the whole of London. We will look to build on that programme in later years, learning from our experience in the first year.

## Proposals for reducing non-accidental fires

163. Last year there were over 1,200 non-accidental fires in the home, as a result of which 16 people died and nearly 900 were injured. A majority of the people who died harmed themselves deliberately and others were the victims of crime.
164. However we know that children with a fascination for fire started a significant number of these fires. We have therefore developed a programme to work with those young people most likely to start fires in the home. The scheme is primarily aimed at children and young people aged up to (and including) 17 years, although on occasion it may be appropriate and desirable to extend the service to include adults. The way the scheme works is that advisers identify the fire risk that the individual concerned presents, and seek to address that risk. Other problems that may present themselves are referred to the appropriate agency.
165. Since the scheme started in late 2001, our advisers have visited over 450 young people in their homes, none of whom were reported as returning to firesetting during the evaluation period. This has been achieved without any active marketing of the scheme, despite which the number of referrals a month has recently doubled. We believe that there is scope for significant growth in the junior firesetter intervention service we provide. These young people are not *potential* firesetters; they have a history of setting fire and constitute one of the highest risk groups for the Authority and their families, friends and neighbours. We will therefore put this scheme on a more permanent basis, recruiting additional volunteer advisors to help us respond to the increasing demand for work with these young people.
166. Non-accidental fires outside of the home account for a much smaller number of deaths (nine last year) than fires in the home and result mostly from crime or suicides in vehicles. However, the number of fires of this type is a problem, as it makes up for some 70 per cent of all such fires

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attended. This not only is a drain on our resources but, more importantly, it also has a significant adverse impact on local communities. For example, the presence of burnt out cars and derelict buildings can act as a catalyst for more serious crime. It also leads to the impression of a community which is not well cared for, which in turn can lead to an increase in graffiti, fly tipping and other antisocial behaviours.

167. For many years, arson has been seen as a problem that was dealt with by the police and other specialist agencies; our role being seen as dealing with the consequences of arson, rather than preventing arson or dealing with arsonists. However we now do all we reasonably can to prevent crime. We are working with local authorities and the police, as part of crime and disorder reduction partnerships, to raise the profile of this type of crime and to play our full role in helping to tackle arson – through prevention work as well as putting out the fires.
168. Currently we run a structured schools programme with visits by school liaison officers aimed at primary school children in years 2 and 6. Station personnel also play an important role in the education of primary school children by following up the visits made by one of our schools officers. They are ideally placed to reinforce the home fire safety messages, encouraging children to communicate this message to their parents, guardians or carers, and to make sure the safety of older relatives and neighbours is considered.
169. However, it is secondary school aged children who are responsible for most antisocial firesetting behaviour. In future years we will consider expanding our current schools programme by developing a teaching package for delivery in secondary schools to fill the gap that currently exists in getting fire safety messages across to children in that age group.
170. While work to challenge and reduce arson is carried out at local level, this needs to be done within an overall framework. Development and co-ordination of this overall strategy to tackle arson has been carried out by London's Arson Reduction Team for which we managed to secure funding from the government sponsored Arson Control Forum. We believe that this initiative has shown real and sustained benefits, and so we have applied for an extension of funding from the Arson Control Forum so that the important and successful work of the Arson Reduction Team can continue.
171. The team will work in those boroughs with the highest frequency of deliberate firesetting and arson. Twelve London boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, Newham, Southwark and Hackney, have been identified as priorities. Their aim, when working in these boroughs will be to:
- reduce vehicle fires, both primary fires (stolen and fraudulent insurance claim) and secondary fires (abandoned);
  - reduce deliberate firesetting, specifically targeting refuse chambers, street refuse, street furniture, skip and bin fires;
  - develop partnerships with the boroughs, neighbourhood wardens, youth engagement projects and the police;
  - raise awareness of arson issues, both among our own staff at station and borough level and externally within the community and other public agencies.
172. An example of how this type of activity can achieve success has been demonstrated in Ealing where a significant localised arson problem was resolved by the installation of fencing across a stretch of parkland previously used by joyriders as a shortcut home.
173. As part of our community engagement plan for Tower Hamlets we have launched a new initiative, the Local Intervention Fire Education (L.I.F.E.) Scheme. This week-long course is targeted at young people and is run by firefighters from the local fire station. Their intervention has been carefully designed to improve the young person's life and citizenship skills. The scheme has adopted best practice

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from similar courses run by other fire authorities. We have already run eleven courses. The L.I.F.E. scheme is widely viewed as a success and is gathering support within the Government Office for London and the GLA.

174. We therefore propose gradually to roll out this project more widely across London, with schemes starting in Islington this September, and Brent early in 2004. This will be followed by an extension of the scheme to a further four boroughs during 2004/05, which will be selected on the basis of their risk profile and the incidence of deliberate firesetting.
175. We are also working with the Prince's Trust in Hounslow on a volunteer programme which provides a 12-week personal development course designed to help unemployed young people improve their skills and become better equipped for employment. This is designed to help the young people to achieve full-time employment, job-related training or enter further education. Each team comprises a mix of young people; with typically ten to fifteen youngsters from differing backgrounds, aged between 16 and 25.
176. This programme has so far engaged some of the hardest to reach young people in society, enabling us to hit the right target audience and achieve measurable results. Subject to final evaluation, there are provisional plans to expand the volunteers programme into Tower Hamlets and to integrate it with the L.I.F.E scheme.
177. Our budget submission to the Mayor includes provision to establish a fund of £100,000 in 2004/05 to support other innovative projects which will promote community fire safety, in particular our work to reduce the amount of arson.

### **Reducing the impact of fires**

178. We currently know about some 30,000 buildings through our work in enforcing fire certification and various licensing arrangements. We have also inspected approximately 80,000 buildings

under the recently introduced Workplace Regulations and have built up fire safety information on these sites.

179. Our inspection programmes for these buildings are already risk-based in that we grade all buildings according to their primary use and the standards of fire safety and general management observed within the building. High-risk buildings are subjected to frequent and comprehensive inspections. Lower-risk buildings are inspected less frequently, with those presenting the lowest risks being checked on a sampling basis.
180. We will continue to identify previously unknown buildings and add them to our inspection programmes. We estimate that there are still potentially some 200,000 workplace buildings to identify and add to our programmes.
181. It is expected that a fundamental review of fire safety law will come to fruition in late 2004 with the introduction of a new Fire Safety (Reform) Order. This will replace existing laws with a consistent risk-based approach covering all buildings used as places of work and/or to which the public have access. Under such an approach the responsibility for carrying out a risk assessment and taking any necessary action to minimise the risks identified during that assessment will rest with the building owner or occupier.
182. The fire and rescue service would remain as the enforcing agency, based on an inspection regime tailored to the risks presented in each building, rather than the prescriptive and resource intensive programme of prior certification which flows from the current requirements under the Fire Precautions Act. Such an approach reflects that already in place for enforcement of health and safety legislation.
183. If and when such a new statutory regime is put in place, we will continue to apply our risk-based inspection programmes to all London buildings falling within the remit of this new law – which we estimate will cover some 500,000 buildings.

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184. We recognise that self assessment and self compliance with fire safety may be a potentially daunting task for someone without technical knowledge of fire safety systems, or someone who is new to the issue of fire safety management. A buildings occupier or owner will need clear and concise guidance on how to comply with the law. We will make sure we maintain a comprehensive set of guidance and advisory notes and make them available to people to help them comply with the law.
185. Although there will be instances where a responsible person will be able to tailor the fire safety solution to their premises unaided, in many cases people may employ professionals from the private sector to advise them how to achieve fire safety in their property. They may also need to employ contractors to supply and fit fire safety systems and equipment. Fire safety is increasingly a technically complex area of business and we believe that people need some way of knowing that the equipment they are being supplied with, the quality of work on equipment installation and the advice they are receiving are all up to a safe and professional standard.
186. For those who want to seek and pay for professional assistance (for example in carrying out their risk assessments and designing a fire safety solution for their premises) there is a wide choice of suppliers and consultants in the market. There is however, currently no consistent and reliable way for the customer to evaluate quality and reliability of the products and services on offer. With the transition towards self-compliance under way, there is considerable scope for sub-standard supply and the mis-selling of products and services in the fire safety market.
187. To provide reassurance on these quality issues, we believe that would be clear benefits in developing third party accreditation for:
- fire safety systems (including automatic fire alarms);
  - fire safety equipment; and
  - fire safety consultancy services.
- This would help to maintain a consistent standard for those businesses participating in the scheme, and support the identification and exchange of best practice in completing risk assessments and making buildings safer.
188. We believe that third party accreditation would provide the following benefits for the fire safety industry and those who use its products.
- assisting users of fire industry systems and services in making an informed choice;
  - assisting owner/occupiers in meeting the need for fire safety systems that are fit for purpose;
  - providing a basis of mitigation for responsible people in demonstrating that they applied due diligence in procuring and maintaining fire safety systems of appropriate standard;
  - raising the level of competence in the fire industry and the wider fire safety community;
  - promoting greater efficiency and competitiveness in the fire industry through development of products that comply with harmonised standards and supported by people who hold recognised qualification for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire safety systems.
189. We will therefore discuss with the government, the building, insurance and fire protection industries, other fire authorities and with the commercial sector more generally the potential benefits of such an accreditation system.
190. To deal with these increased responsibilities for enforcing fire safety we are in the process of procuring and developing new computer-based systems to handle the information about buildings and to manage the inspection programmes. The system will incorporate a map-based system so that the geographic distribution of buildings and their associated risks can be analysed and, as part of a future development, linked to our operational response.

191. Work has also started on proposals to link these information systems electronically to the wider London community so that buildings owners or occupiers can provide information direct to our fire safety teams and in return receive advice on fire safety matters. Similar links will be developed with other enforcing authorities to streamline the exchange of information and consultation on fire safety and related issues. This will support our work to meet government targets to make all our services available electronically by 2005.

192. Currently our inspection work is carried out by specialist fire safety officers, based in borough teams. Following a recent best value review we have changed the composition of these teams, achieving efficiency gains by increasing the number of non-uniformed staff carrying out this work instead of trained fire officers. We propose to enhance our fire safety inspection work by involving staff based at fire stations more directly in preliminary risk assessment of previously unknown buildings, and inspection of lower risk buildings.

193. We will continue to work with bodies and groups with an interest in fire safety issues to develop and evaluate effective fire safety technologies and management systems.

194. We will continue to lobby for improvements in standard building design codes to incorporate proven fire safety technologies including the provision of fire sprinkler systems in high risk buildings.

195. We will continue to work with building control authorities and major developers to ensure effective fire safety design in new and complex building projects in London.

196. We regularly attend fires where there are cylinders containing compressed gases, and recognise that these present particular risks both to the public and to our own firefighters. We have therefore put in place safe systems of work at these incidents which involve the evacuation of the immediate area, sometimes for up to 24 hours depending on the nature of the incident

(acetylene cylinders in particular cause longer-lasting risks). Clearly such an evacuation can have a considerable impact on local businesses and residents. We will therefore lobby government and industry to replace use of acetylene with a safer alternative, or to improve controls over the use of acetylene through the introduction of more stringent safety legislation. We will also explore ways in which, where cylinders are kept, we can make sure they are safely stored and clearly identified.

### Responding to calls for assistance at fires

197. We have already described how the current property-based risk categorisation system works. Recommended standards are set by the government for each of the four risk categories for the number of fire engines which should be sent to reported fires, and how quickly they should get there. These standards are:

Risk category	No of fire engines in initial attendance	Approximate time limits for attendance (minutes)		
		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
A	3	5	5	8
B	2	5	8	-
C	1	8 – 10	-	-
D	1	20	-	-

198. Our current response standards were developed in the light of a range of factors, but we have made sure that they do meet, and in places exceed, these recommended national standards. However once they have been removed, as the government intends to do shortly, we will look at ways in which we can improve community safety by adopting a more flexible pattern of emergency response and targeting our resources in those areas where they can have the greatest impact on improving community safety. We undertake to consult (in line with government guidance) with stakeholders, including our staff, on any such proposals which we develop in the future, **before** any final decision are taken.

199. We operate a policy in London of **exceeding** these recommended standards by always

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mobilising at least two fire engines to property fires (including those in 'C' and 'D' risk areas). This helps us to maintain safe systems of working at those fires where the crew of a single fire engine may not be sufficient to deal with that fire quickly and safely. We propose to continue this policy, except in some specific circumstances described below.

- we wish to reduce the unnecessary movement of our fire engines and other specialist vehicles through London's streets, particularly those which are mobilised in support of the first fire engine to arrive, but which are not often used at the incident itself. Such an approach would release resources which we can use more effectively in prevention work, and would reduce both the risk to the public associated with moving large vehicles at speed through London's narrow streets and the environmental impact (in terms of noise, exhaust emissions etc.) of unnecessary vehicle movements.
- in this first plan we do **not** propose to change the target attendance times for the **first** fire engine to attend fires;
- in this first plan we do **not** propose to reduce the number of fire engines, or to change the places at which they are located. We also do not propose to close any of our existing 112 fire stations;

## Mobilising

200. One of our core responsibilities is to make efficient arrangements to respond to calls for assistance from the public. We have just completed major investment to provide a new, state of the art, computerised mobilising system which is located in a new centre in east London. This new mobilising centre, with associated fallback arrangements in the event of any problems with the main system, will be opening in mid-2004. It will provide a more flexible, resilient and efficient service to the public, and will enable us to provide a more sophisticated response, tailored to the needs of particular incidents.

201. We are also participating in a major national project to replace the radio system through which our mobilising centre communicates with our fire engines and operational officers, and to provide radio communications at incidents. By joining together with other fire authorities to provide this new system we will share the development costs, and secure effective procurement arrangements. This joint approach will also make sure we can communicate effectively both with neighbouring brigades and with other emergency services such as the police (who use compatible technology).
202. At the moment all calls for assistance receive an immediate response (though of course only a single response when more than one call is received about the same incident) unless we are satisfied that it would be inappropriate for the Brigade to attend (for example, calls from people locked out of their buildings where there is no risk of fire or other humanitarian reasons for us to help out).
203. During the recent industrial action by firefighters it became necessary for our control staff to check with people calling for help whether the incident concerned was one which the military could help with, given the reduced resources and expertise which they had available. This experience demonstrated that our control staff are able to exercise greater judgement about the appropriate level of response to different calls for assistance than they have been asked to do until now.
204. We believe that the lessons learned during this period can be applied in the future to help us reduce unnecessary vehicle movements through London's streets and to release more time for operational staff to carry out additional duties proposed elsewhere in this plan (such as prevention work or training).
205. We therefore propose to make the following changes to the way in which our control staff deal with calls for assistance. These changes are directed at making more efficient and effective use of our skilled resources. They will not affect

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our ability to continue to provide a rapid emergency response to all fires and other calls for assistance, commensurate with the risks which they pose.

- **hoax calls:** our control staff will question callers using predetermined questions where there is reason to suspect that a call may not be genuine. We believe this will help to reduce the large number of malicious calls (over 10,000 a year), which we have already begun to reduce following agreement with mobile phone companies to disconnect phones used repeatedly to make hoax calls. Similar policies have been applied successfully elsewhere in the country (for example West Yorkshire has succeeded in reducing hoax calls from over 7,000 in 1997 to some 2,500 in 2002). We estimate that this could reduce the number of hoax calls we respond to by some 75 per cent (that is to between 2,500 and 3,000 a year);
- **fires:** sometimes members of the public call the Brigade after an incident has been reported and appliances sent to deal with it, because our assistance is no longer needed (for example, the fire has been put out, a person trapped in a vehicle has been released etc). This happens for about 500 of the 50,000 fires we attend each year. In these circumstances we will continue to send one fire engine to the incident to check that no further assistance is actually required, but all other fire engines which would have gone to that incident will be returned to their stations by our control centre;
- **automatic fire alarms:** after an automatic fire alarm has sounded, and we have sent fire engines to deal with it, occasionally we receive further information about why that alarm may have sounded (for example, builders working in the buildings, or toast being burnt) and that Brigade assistance is no longer needed. In these circumstances our control staff will use their judgement to decide whether any attendance is still needed, whether a single fire engine will still be sent to check the situation on the ground or whether further fire engines

need to be sent. Where the alarm was caused by an actual fire we will always send at least one fire engine to check the position and make sure that the building is now safe;

- **road traffic accidents:** similarly after we been asked to attend a road traffic accident we are sometimes contacted by the police to say that our assistance is no longer needed. Following discussions at a national level between the police and fire services it is proposed that the police officer attending the scene will have the authority to stand down the fire and rescue service response, though we would continue to send a single fire engine to the scene to make sure any residual risk to the public remains covered;
- **abandoned calls:** these are calls where the person rings off while still in contact with the phone company operator (i.e. before they are put through to our control centre). We do not respond to such calls from mobile phones (as the location of the caller is not known). We will continue to respond to all such calls from fixed phones inside buildings as there may be a genuine emergency which has led to the call being interrupted. We have looked at all the calls from a public phone box outside a building for the four years 1999/2000 to 2002/03. Over 20,000 of these calls were received during these four years, out of which only 18 (less than 0.01 per cent) turned out to be fires. Of these 18 fires, only six were in buildings. Three of these were in people's homes, but none of them turned out to need any firefighting by the Brigade. The other three were all small fires, dealt with by a single hose reel with the fire contained to the room of origin. None of these fires involved any risk of death or injury. In the light of this experience we propose not to respond in future to abandoned calls from public phone boxes, unless a further call is received about an incident in the area, or unless our control officers have any reason to believe that the call may have been genuine. These calls would continue to be referred to us by the phone

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company operator, and we would record the details of the call. This will enable us to monitor the impact of this change closely.

- **referrals to Transco:** we presently receive about 600 calls a year to attend domestic gas leaks or carbon monoxide detectors which are sounding. However Transco have arrangements in place to deal with such incidents (with appropriately trained personnel) and our experience is that they are best placed to deal with these incidents. We therefore propose to refer all such calls direct to Transco, with no Brigade response.
- **dangerous buildings:** similarly we are sometimes called out (particularly during high winds) to help where structures (such as buildings, scaffolding etc) are in precarious positions. We believe that local authorities, working with builders and developers, are in a better position to deal safely with such incidents, and that the police are best placed to establish a cordon to preserve public safety until the building is made safe. We will open discussions about putting in place effective arrangements for us to refer such calls to an agency better placed to deal with them.

### Automatic fire alarms

206. Installing systems for the early detection and warning of fire is one of the most effective ways of reducing fire deaths. Promoting ownership of domestic smoke alarms is a priority for the Authority and a main focus for our community fire safety initiatives.
207. While fitting an alarm in the form of a smoke detector is optional in private dwellings, installation of automatic fire detection and suppression equipment is a requirement we stipulate for many commercial properties as part of our fire safety enforcement work. There is no doubt that installation of such equipment has helped to improve workplace safety in business and commercial property, and to reduce fire deaths and property damage. This is why we are

also promoting the use of smoke detectors and sprinklers in people's homes.

208. A particular drain on our resources is caused by attending false alarms caused by automatic fire alarm systems. Between March 1999 and March 2003 we responded to nearly 200,000 such calls (some 50,000 per year). However the breakdown of these calls shows that:
- only 6,230 of these calls (3.1 per cent) proved to be a primary fire (that is a fire in a building);
  - of these fires, 3,408 required no firefighting action at all and a further 1,945 were made safe with minimal intervention using no more than handheld extinguishers;
  - only 872 (0.4 per cent of the total AFA calls) resulted from fires which required further intervention. For many of these real fires, additional calls were made to the Brigade to confirm that there was a fire.
209. Our approach will therefore be to continue to work closely with building owners and occupiers, and with the fire alarm companies, to make sure the alarms are correctly installed and maintained, and to develop good building management practices to reduce the number of false alarms.
210. Fire alarm systems in commercial buildings must conform to the relevant British Standard. Over the years this standard has improved and evolved but revised standards only apply to new and altered systems and so there are older systems still in operation. The latest version of this standard does place a duty on alarm providers to reduce false calls.
211. There are many reasons for building managers and occupiers, and for alarm providers, to reduce these false alarms. Most buildings will evacuate people when the fire alarm sounds. This is disruptive to business and often incurs loss to the business in terms of productivity, sales or manufacturing output. Alarm companies are keen to co-operate as repeated false alarms are bad for their business (as the client may blame

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- the alarm company when their business is disrupted).
212. We have already started working closely with a number of alarm companies and building occupiers in London to address this problem. We welcome their co-operation in this work, which has already shown some signs of success. However we are looking to expand these initiatives for the benefit of the companies concerned and the general public, as well as ourselves.
213. Where efforts to work with building owners and occupiers fails to reduce the number of false alarms in their buildings we will be prepared, where appropriate, to publicise the diversion of public resources which they are causing and do what we can to bring external pressure to bear to improve the management of their buildings.
214. We have asked the government (so far without any sign of success) for powers which would allow us to charge for our attendance at buildings where we are repeatedly called out as a result of false alarms from this equipment.
215. Given the importance of automatic detection and suppression equipment in detecting fires early, thereby helping to improve public safety, to reduce fire spread and property damage and to help maintain business continuity, we will continue to send a rapid emergency response to all alarms which do sound, based on the risks they present.
216. The revised approach for responding to automatic alarms as proposed below, has been the subject of a risk assessment, which confirms that our proposed approach is consistent with our overall objective of making London a safer city. They also reflect the practical experience of the situation during the recent strikes by firefighters, when similar arrangements were put in place and worked well. A similar approach has also been adopted successfully elsewhere in the country (for example, in Merseyside and Oxfordshire).
217. We propose to:
- continue our current arrangements for responding to calls for assistance in residential buildings where a smoke alarm is sounding;
  - continue to respond, normally mobilising the nearest available fire engine in response to an alarm from automatic equipment in other types of building;
  - to supplement this initial attendance by additional fire engines or specialist vehicles as appropriate if the initial alarm call is followed up by any of the following:
    - additional alarms sounding in the same building (indicating that a fire may be spreading);
    - supporting calls to the Brigade from people confirming that a fire is suspected;
    - on request from the commander of the first fire engine when it arrives.
218. As ever, maintaining safe systems of working for our staff will remain paramount, and so it is recognised that if the first fire engine to attend has a minimum crew of four, their immediate role would be to carry out a dynamic risk assessment of the situation to identify and establish safe systems of working until supporting crew(s) arrive.
219. Where there are sound reasons to do so, and in the light of risk assessments by the borough commander or their staff, we will continue to send more than a single fire engine in response to the first alarm from automatic equipment. This may include sites where:
- there is a known or suspected sleeping risk without adequate on-site supervision by responsible competent staff who will be wide awake;
  - it is known or suspected that people inside the building may be aged, infirm or otherwise impaired and again where there is no on-site supervision by responsible competent staff;
  - the buildings are known or suspected to be of sufficient scale and or complexity to justify an

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additional crew to help trace the cause of the alarm signal;

- the buildings are known or suspected to be of a type or in an area where an additional crew would be required to secure the safety of the fire crews;
- the buildings are known to have a history of deliberate fire setting and are known or suspected to be unoccupied at the time the call is received.

220. Conversely, we also propose to make **no** attendance where an agreed risk assessment protocol has been followed and:

- the responsible person/management of the buildings concerned has previously undertaken in writing to carry out a check of their own buildings and to call us where a real problem or suspected problem exists and this procedure is part of their fire risk assessment;
- the buildings are linked to call receiving centres and the responsible person/management of the buildings has previously agreed in writing no attendance will be made unless a second alarm device actuates.

### **The role of call receiving centres**

221. Call receiving centres are remote sites, which make the 999 call on behalf of the occupiers when an alarm goes off. We propose to work more closely with those centres to encourage them, in line with the relevant British Standard, to put in place some filtering and additional monitoring on calls received in their centres. For example, the call centres would either call back the buildings where the alarm was sounding to confirm the situation, or with more complex alarm systems, actually monitor where and how the alarm was caused. In these cases (and some other scenarios) the call centre operator can postpone the 999 call until additional information is verified and confirms that a Brigade attendance is needed. However the expectation would be to always err of the side of caution, and where there was any doubt the Brigade should be called.

222. Such a collaborative approach is already in use by police services who experience comparable problems with false calls to burglar alarm systems. We will consider further, and consult as appropriate, on whether to propose a similar scheme in relation to fire alarms – although certain safeguards would need to remain in place to make sure the public safety is maintained.

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## Our fire engines and other specialist vehicles

### Fire engines

223. As indicated above we do not propose to make any changes at this stage in the size or disposition of our fleet of pumping appliances (normally called fire engines), nor in the arrangements for crewing them. Neither are we proposing in this plan to alter any of the arrangements we have with other brigades to provide mutual support at incidents, although the scope of these arrangements will be extended to include the additional appliances described below. However we do propose to make better use of that fleet, reducing unnecessary vehicle movements and using the time released to allow our crews to carry out more prevention work or training.
224. As we develop better risk-based information, and put in place the systems needed to allow a more flexible use of our fleet of fire engines, we will be looking to develop a new pattern of emergency cover; one which is clearly and demonstrably linked to the changing pattern of risk as people move about London from home to work or shops, then on to entertainment or recreational activities and back home again.
225. In particular we envisage a situation where fire engines may not remain based at a single fire station, so that that they can be ready to respond to the particular risks posed in concentrations of commercial buildings where people are working during the day and the very different patterns of risk which apply at night when people are sleeping.
226. We will consult, in line with government guidance, on any future proposals which may emerge to change the current number or location of fire engines.

### Other specialist vehicles

227. We not only run a fleet of fire engines, but also keep available a fleet of other specialist vehicles.

We recently carried out a review of this fleet of specialist vehicles; which currently comprises:

- five fire rescue units;
- 16 aerial appliances (of different types) : these are vehicles with ladders or hydraulic platforms having a high aerial reach;
- five centres with demountable containers (or pods) providing support for hose laying, damage control, breathing apparatus and hazardous materials;
- two fire boats;
- six fire investigation units;
- four command units and an associated conference pod;
- one brigade command unit.

228. No changes are proposed in relation to the fire boats, fire investigation units or command units.

229. We make a number of proposals in this plan to change where we base some of our specialist vehicles and how many of them we should have. These proposals are based on a careful analysis of the strategic implications of the disposition of all our front line vehicles and an initial assessment whether the fire stations concerned can accommodate both the vehicles and their crews, and the cost of any modifications which may be needed. We will keep these proposals under review in the light of the detailed costs of necessary building works to these fire stations. If these show that the proposals are either unworkable or are not cost effective we will consider moving the vehicles affected to other stations in that part of London.

### Operational resource centres

230. Our review identified that significant efficiency improvements could be made by combining all equipment, not carried on front-line appliances, at centralised depots. This would mean combining the operational van service with the service currently provided by the demountable pod system including supply of non-mobile

equipment. The proposed role of these resource centres has been expanded as part of our work to improve resilience to respond to catastrophic acts of terrorism and we have agreed to increase the number of resource centres from three to four, strategically located across London. These centres will have two primary vehicles (a lorry and a van) with a range of equipment available on pallets which can be loaded (using fork-lift trucks) and transported to incidents. Each vehicle will carry an inventory of standard equipment as a default load.

231. These four operational resource centres will be located at Addington, Barking, Finchley and Sutton fire stations. Some additional building works will be needed at Addington Fire Station before the full range of equipment can be located there, but in the meantime the centre will start operating, initially with just the van service.
232. We have already decided to provide four permanently crewed hose laying lorries, which will be placed away from the operational resource centres at Romford, Beckenham, Richmond and Southgate fire stations.

#### **Fire rescue units**

233. The review also recommended expanding the role of the current fire rescue units (to include a capacity for carrying out line rescue (rope access), water rescue and urban search and rescue. It also recommended an increase in the number of units (and crews) from five to nine. This was the minimum number needed to carry out their new role effectively, based on the target to achieve an average fifteen minute attendance time across London. This target attendance time allows for the attendance and deployment of these specialist units in time for casualties to be released and transported within the so called 'golden hour': the optimum time for a casualty to be cut out of their vehicle, given on site life support treatment and moved to an Accident & Emergency Unit to enable them to have a good chance of survival.

234. This situation was further reviewed following the tragic events of 11 September 2001, and the need to make sure London had the resilience to respond to catastrophic acts of terrorism or other major events. In particular this underlined the need for a substantial increase in our capacity to carry out urban search and rescue work. As a result we have decided to increase the number of fire rescue units from the current five to ten. These will be strategically located across London at the following stations:

Battersea	Bexley
Croydon	East Ham
Edmonton	Euston
Heston	Hornchurch
Lewisham	Wembley

235. The financing of these additional units has already been agreed and we will bring an additional five of these units into service next year and also replace the existing ones with new and enhanced capabilities as new vehicles become available.

#### **Aerial appliances**

236. We have reviewed the use we make of our current fleet of aerial appliances, in light of the information we have about their contribution to reducing risk.
237. Currently we maintain 16 aerial appliances ready to respond to fires. These are of three different types: turntable ladders (TL), hydraulic platforms (HP) and combined aerial ladder platforms (ALP). These are currently based at the following stations:
- |                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Chelsea (TL)    | Clapham (TL)       |
| Dowgate (ALP)   | Forest Hill (ALP)  |
| Greenwich (HP)  | Hayes (HP)         |
| Islington (HP)  | Leyton (HP)        |
| Norbury (HP)    | Old Kent Road (TL) |
| Paddington (TL) | Plaistow (ALP)     |
| Soho (TL)       | Tottenham (ALP)    |
| Wembley (ALP)   | Wimbledon (ALP)    |
238. We have analysed the incidents to which aerial appliances have been mobilised in recent years (1995 to 2000). This analysis shows that:

- the majority of incidents to which aerial appliances are mobilised (78 per cent) are in response to an automatic fire alarm;
  - 96 per cent of those calls from automatic detection equipment turn out to be false alarms;
  - out of all the occasions on which an aerial appliance is sent to an incident, they are only actually used at less than one fire out of every 270 (and one incident in every 40 for special services). This means that they are only used at incidents on average on some 610 occasions a year (less than once a week on average for each appliance);
  - however, on average, aerial appliances are involved in a traffic accident on their way to or from an emergency in one call out of every 700. This means that they are involved in over 100 accidents a year, with the attendant risks to the public who may be involved in an accident with such a large heavy vehicle. Reducing the number of unnecessary movements by these appliances will therefore help to make a contribution to improving community safety, as well as reducing their impact on the environment (through noise, vehicle emissions etc);
  - the four busiest aerial appliances attend nearly 50 per cent of the total calls (although most of these were to alarms caused by automatic equipment), and are all located centrally;
  - the majority of addresses to which we send these appliances involve the sort of buildings where aerial appliances have never actually been used over the last five years because most high rise buildings in London are designed and built to allow the public to escape safely, and firefighters to enter the building and fight the fire safely without the need to use external ladders or platforms. Further, most modern high rise buildings in central London are too tall for aerial appliances to be of much use (30 metres being the highest they can reach).
239. We have already set out our proposals to change the way in which we respond to fire calls caused by automatic fire alarms. In light of the analysis above, we propose to also stop mobilising aerial appliances in response to automatic fire alarms, unless there are exceptional reasons identified by the borough commander to keep the aerial appliance as part of our first attendance. This change would reduce unnecessary movements of these vehicles, and the associated risks to the public from moving these large machines around at speed through London's (often narrow and congested) streets.
240. The vehicles will continue to be available on request by an incident commander, or whenever the information available to our control centre (for example if a supporting call is received) suggests that they may be needed.
241. These appliances also carry out rescues at incidents other than fires, up to their maximum reach of 30 metres. This may include situations such as people stuck in window cleaners' cradles, or lifting overweight people (who may require urgent medical attention) from their flats.
242. For now, we propose to maintain a fleet of aerial appliances, strategically located across London in such a way that their use can be targeted at those types of incidents where they can make a real difference. The current number and disposition of aerial appliances enables us to deliver our services. However, as explained in paragraph 7.90 above, we propose to reduce by over 70 per cent the number of incidents to which aerial appliances are mobilised. Coupled with a more effective disposition of these appliances, giving a better coverage of London, we do not need to keep 16 of these specialist appliances. They perform a wide range of tasks, many of which are not time critical. So that we can plan our response to those incidents where an aerial appliance may be used, we have assumed that it will be able to attend within 30 minutes or, in those few parts of London where they have historically been used for rescues (that is central

London) within ten minutes. For much of London that is quicker than at present.

243. Following a detailed analysis of workload it is considered that 11 aerial appliances, located as now proposed will be sufficient to meet these planning assumptions and is an appropriate level of cover for this type of specialist vehicle. The reduction in workload as a result of not attending automatic fire alarms will increase availability so that the proposed redistribution of aerial appliances will provide a strategic spread across London and a grouping of appliances near central London to allow for the likely busier workload for this type of appliance in this area.
244. These changes will make sure aerial appliances will be able to arrive in time to undertake all of their roles at fires and other emergencies. In those few parts of London where they have historically been used for rescues (that is in central London) the proposed distribution is also denser to allow for higher workloads. For the remaining parts of London where risk is not expected to involve using aerial appliances for rescues, but as support in dealing with a very large fire or other type of emergency, the strategic distribution will allow an aerial appliance to reach an incident in sufficient time to perform its full range of functions effectively. The significant reduction in workload proposed will also increase the likelihood of these vehicles being available for genuine fire calls, while retaining 11 will provide sufficient numbers of aerial appliances to allow for occasions when more than one incident needing this type of appliance happens at the same time.
245. This proposed reduction in the number of aerial appliances from 16 to 11 would produce annual savings of £1.75m, though there may be a need to incur some one off property costs to provide the necessary facilities at the two new stations at which they would be based (Dagenham and Sidcup).
246. We are also looking at the effectiveness of the different types of aerial appliances we maintain. Keeping three different types of aerial appliance

adds to maintenance and fleet costs, and makes it more difficult to ensure we have the right people in the right place with the right skills to crew the different types of appliance. We are therefore looking at reducing the different types of aerial appliance we use to two, or even one.

247. These 11 aerial appliances would be located as follows:

Clapham	Dagenham
Forest Hill	Hayes
Old Kent Road	Paddington
Sidcup	Soho
Tottenham	Wembley
Wimbledon	

248. This means that:

- (a) we would continue to keep an aerial appliance at the following fire stations:

Clapham	Forest Hill
Hayes	Old Kent Road
Paddington	Soho
Tottenham	Wembley
Wimbledon	

- (b) we would put an aerial appliance into the following stations which do not currently have one:

Dagenham	Sidcup
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- (c) we would withdraw the aerial appliances currently located at the following stations:

Chelsea	Dowgate
Greenwich	Islington
Leyton	Norbury
Plaistow	

## London resilience

249. We propose to introduce the following new appliances in London over the coming year to improve London's resilience to cope with a major terrorist act or other types of major emergency.

## Incident response units

250. These units are designed to be able to handle mass decontamination of the public. The government has already supplied us with four interim units, while the purpose-built vehicles are

being manufactured. These interim vehicles have been deployed at East Greenwich, Kingsland, Park Royal, and Wimbledon fire stations, providing coverage across all four quadrants of London.

251. The government has agreed to provide us with ten of these units in the longer term. As soon as these purpose-built vehicles become available later this year they will be deployed at the following fire stations.

Bexley	Croydon
East Greenwich	Harrow
Kingsland	Park Royal
Twickenham	Wennington
Wimbledon	Woodford

This distribution has been agreed in the light of:

- ability to meet a 45 minute attendance time anywhere in London;
- ability to contribute to a 45 minute national attendance standard set by ODPM;
- access to major routes into and out of London so they can be used if they are needed in any of the areas surrounding London;
- availability of accommodation at existing fire stations capable of housing a vehicle of this size.

### **Lorries and personnel carriers**

252. Lessons learned from the emergency services' response to the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York show us that one of the major challenges is the control and marshalling of the large number of vehicles used to transport to the scene both the staff and equipment needed to deal with the incident.

253. There are two main ways in which we can transport the number of staff and the amount of equipment we would need, while also minimising congestion at the scene. The first is through effective strategic command and control and incident management. This can make sure the right resources are mobilised, to the right locations, and that they are co-ordinated effectively when they arrive at the scene. The

second is through streamlining the way in which these resources (both staff and equipment) are moved to the scene.

254. We will therefore provide:

- nine lorries which can move the large amount of equipment which would be needed at a major incident safely and efficiently; and
- 10 personnel carriers which can move our firefighters and their personal protective equipment without the need to move a fully stowed fire engine.

255. The nine lorries will be able to carry a range of the equipment which may be needed at such an incident. This would include additional supplies of extended duration breathing apparatus, casualty rescue stretchers, gastight suits and equipment which can detect and identify chemical and biological agents.

256. Once transported to the incident by lorry, this equipment would be picked up by our crews (who will be trained to use it) who will have been taken to the incident on fire engines or by the 10 new personnel carriers.

257. Once delivered, we will base the new lorries at the following stations:

Bethnal Green	Clapham
Ealing	New Cross
Paddington	Plaistow
Twickenham	Wandsworth
Woolwich	

258. The personnel carriers (which will also be available for day-to-day use unless and until a major incident happened) will be located at these stations:

Beckenham	Belsize
Dagenham	Islington
Lee Green	New Malden
Northolt	Tooting
Walthamstow	Woodside

259. These locations for the lorries and personnel carriers have been chosen after looking at:

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- the need to achieve a strategic distribution which is near, but not within, those areas most at risk from terrorist attack;
  - access to major routes into and out of London;
  - availability of accommodation capable of housing the vehicle and crew.

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### Bulk water carriers

260. We will provide six bulk water carriers which will allow us to continue working in the event that the usual mains water supply has been interrupted. These vehicles would also provide a water supply to the hygiene and welfare units described below. These will be located at the following stations (after considering the same factors as for the lorries and personnel carriers):

Hainault	Hendon
Kingston	Norbury
Peckham	Walthamstow

### Hazardous materials incident laboratories

261. We have in place arrangements for our scientific advisers to provide advice at incidents where unknown substances may have been spilt. However this needs to be supplemented to cope with the situation involving the deliberate release (potentially by terrorists) of such substances at incidents commonly termed chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear. We will therefore provide two mobile chemical laboratories to attend such incidents. These will be located at the following stations (after looking at the same set of factors):

Acton	Greenwich
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### Hygiene and welfare units

262. Attendance at catastrophic incidents is likely to mean that our crews will be working at these incidents much longer than is normal, as in more normal circumstances crews are rotated on a regular basis to provide reliefs. In the event that such regular reliefs cannot be provided at a major incident we will provide appropriate hygiene and welfare facilities at the site.

263. We are exploring the possibility of joint arrangements with another agency to provide such facilities, but whatever route is chosen we will still need somewhere to base these units, when they are not being used. In that case they would be based at the following stations:

Stratford	Wandsworth
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### Other vehicles

264. In addition to the vehicles described above, the government are also likely to provide us with further vehicles and equipment. These are likely to include a regional command unit, urban search and rescue units and heavy pumping appliances. However until we have agreed with the government, what further vehicles are to be provided, how many of them, what equipment they will carry and their intended role, it would be premature to decide where they may be located.

265. The proposed location of all our emergency vehicles at fire stations across London, in the light of the proposals above, is shown in Appendix G.

### Property issues

266. The introduction of the new appliances to improve London's resilience, and the proposed changes in the location of other appliances (such as fire rescue units and aerial appliances), means that some building works will need to be carried out to our fire stations; though when deciding where to put appliances we have tried to minimise the need for building works. We have therefore set aside £500,000 in next year's budget to carry out these works.

### Emergency planning

267. The Authority has a range of statutory responsibilities relating to emergency planning, as well as running London Fire Brigade. However the London boroughs are the principal bodies responsible for emergency planning in their areas, and so we work closely with them, and other agencies, to secure the safety of London's people, business and the environment.

268. We will continue to work with these other agencies to make sure our main emergency planning responsibilities are met. These are:

- assisting the boroughs to meet their responsibilities to prepare emergency plans, to

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train their staff in preparing those plans, and to exercise the plans to make sure they are robust;

- working with businesses, and the other emergency services, to prepare emergency plans as required under the Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations. These cover sites which are identified by the Health & Safety Executive as presenting major risks to the surrounding area (and the people who live or work in it) should an accident happen on that site. Typically these are sites with major chemical plants or storage of hazardous materials in large quantities (for example, main storage sites for gas supplies). We also work with the owners of those sites, the local borough council and other emergency services, to test those plans regularly. There are currently 20 sites in London covered by these regulations;
- preparing and exercising plans, in partnership with others, in line with the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001. Under these regulations we make sure, in the event of a radiological emergency in London, information is available about the emergency itself and what measures Londoners should take to minimise the risk to themselves;
- working with relevant businesses and other agencies to secure the safe operation of 350 kilometres of pipelines running through, or under, London, in line with the Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996.

269. We will also continue to sponsor, organise and facilitate multi-agency events which bring together key players from across the public, private and voluntary sectors to increase awareness about emergency planning issues, to make sure all of those agencies understand their responsibilities to prevent major disasters.

270. The government intends to bring in a Civil Contingencies Bill, building on the draft published some months ago. The aim of the Bill would be to update and improve the current

statutory framework for emergency planning, creating a long-term foundation for civil contingencies capable of meeting the challenges presented by international terrorism and the changing climate.

271. It is anticipated that, while under the government's proposals the London boroughs would retain their core responsibilities for emergency planning, this Authority would also have responsibilities to:

- assess the risks of an emergency happening;
- maintain plans to enable us to continue to carry out our functions in the event of a disaster;
- plan to prevent emergencies happening in the first place, and to minimise and mitigate its effects should a disaster occur;
- put in place arrangements to warn the public if and when a disaster happens, and to give them appropriate advice about what they should do to help keep themselves safe.

272. These proposals are fully consistent with the overall approach we have adopted in this plan, of using risk assessment and management techniques to inform and prioritise all of our activities. We therefore welcome the government's proposals and will support their early enactment, subject to the provision of adequate financing arrangements which recognise our role in securing emergency preparedness.

273. We will continue to work in close collaboration with the Association of London Government (and individual London boroughs) and with the government to define and enhance the important role this Authority has in supporting the London boroughs to meet their responsibilities and to ensure effective co-ordination across London, given that disasters (if and when they occur) will not respect borough boundaries.

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## Working to prevent emergencies not involving a risk of fire

274. Our plans for working to prevent, and to mitigate the effects of, incidents not involving a risk of fire are based on the government's declared intention to provide clear statutory powers to carry out such work. The speed with which we can implement these plans will partly depend on how quickly the government provides the necessary powers, although much of this programme can be delivered using our existing powers.
275. There is no single agency, at national or London-wide level, with an overall responsibility for community safety, although the London boroughs have the power to promote the well being of their area, and have done some excellent work through local strategic partnerships, regeneration initiatives etc. to tackle these problems.
276. Consequently, there is also no single agency working to bring together in one place information about the different risks in London (for example, from fire, crime, disease, illness and disability, pollution, flooding, environmental health, road traffic and other modes of transport, safety of buildings). This means that little work is being done to examine the factors (for example, age, poverty, social exclusion, alcohol and drug abuse) which increase (or decrease) those different risks, and some of which will impact on more than one of these risks.
277. We have started to identify the range of different agencies involved in different aspects of community safety – and this is shown in Appendix C. This shows just how fragmented the current arrangements are, which makes it very difficult for any of the agencies concerned to look at the overall impact of their combined efforts on improving community safety and whether setting different overall priorities and using the combined resources in a different way could achieve substantial improvements in overall safety and quality of life.
278. We welcome the work which has been done by the GLA as part of the development of the Mayor's strategies which has begun to address some of these cross-cutting issues. However we propose to work closely with key agencies (at government level, the GLA and its functional bodies, the boroughs and agencies such as the Environment Agency, various health trusts etc.) to look at how we can bring together our data about risks, and the factors which impact on them and how we can develop more effective partnerships to improve our combined impact on improving community safety and the quality of life across London.
279. The objective will be to integrate this work with the development of our databases about risks, as we put in place a more sophisticated approach to integrated risk management. In particular we are keen to make sure, where possible, we develop a consistent approach with other agencies for systems development, data collection, input and analysis and that data collected by one agency can be shared with others and integrated with other risk-based data (subject to data protection requirements). This will improve the quality and accessibility of risk information available to **all** agencies. It will also be the most effective approach, reducing the risk of overlap and duplication of effort if different agencies seek to collect the same information.
280. A number of agencies are already working to prevent, and minimise the impact of, emergencies such as road traffic accidents, flooding, dangerous buildings etc. We will develop better partnerships with those agencies so that we can bring our experience, expertise, resources and reputation to bear to join in initiatives and campaigns on issues such as road safety, water safety, and prevention of accidents in the home. This will help to drive down the number of such emergencies happening in the first place.

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## Responding to calls for assistance at incidents not involving any risk of fire

281. We already attend a wide range of incidents where there is no apparent risk of fire. These are sometimes known as special services. The different types of incidents at which we will provide assistance, some of which we may charge for are described in more detail in Appendix B. This also shows the number of each type of special service we have provided over the last four years.

282. Nearly 80 per cent of these incidents reflect just five (of the 27) different types of services rendered by the Brigade. These are:

- releasing people shut in lifts;
- flooding;
- road traffic accidents;
- people locked out of buildings;
- making buildings etc. safe.

Releasing people shut in lifts represents by far the biggest share; around 37 per cent of the total special services.

283. Looking across the whole range of special services the Brigade provides, around a half of all the non-fire incidents which we attend can reasonably be described as representing relatively low risk to the community. For example, people shut in lifts or locked out of their homes or workplace, while suffering inconvenience are normally at little risk.

Conversely a road traffic accident (where someone may be trapped in a vehicle), or a dangerous building does represent a significant risk to those directly affected and, to a lesser degree, to other members of the public in the immediate vicinity.

284. Our approach to providing assistance at non-fire emergencies will therefore be:

- to focus our efforts on those types of incidents call which **do** present significant risks to the public or to the environment;

- to seek to reduce the drain on our resources by providing assistance at incidents where there is little, if any, direct risk to the public;

- to encourage people to contact other agencies where these are able to provide assistance and where speed of response is not critical to protect public safety.

285. This would provide the opportunity to release some of the resources currently used to provide services at incidents where risks to the public are low, and to use those resources to develop and implement more effective ways of delivering community safety improvements (for example, through preventative work).

286. For the moment we propose to continue to provide the full range of special services summarised in Appendix A. However in the longer term we propose to work with other agencies to reduce the demands on the Brigade to attend incidents where there is a low risk to the public (or indeed no risk at all).

287. To illustrate the implications of this approach we discuss below each of the five main special services we provide. Taken together these types of incidents (releasing people shut in lifts; flooding; road traffic accidents; effecting entry to lock-outs/lock-ins; and making safe dangerous structures) represent some 80 per cent of total special services calls (around 40,000 incidents a year).

### (A) Releasing people shut in lifts

288. Over the last four years the Brigade has attended some 75,000 calls to help release people shut in lifts and the number has been increasing steadily.

289. The number of these calls is over three times as many as for any other type of special service, and represents some 37 per cent of total special service calls. The majority of such incidents occur in high rise social housing.

290. We do not believe that the Brigade is the most appropriate agency to provide assistance to people who are shut in lifts. The owners or managers of the buildings concerned will have

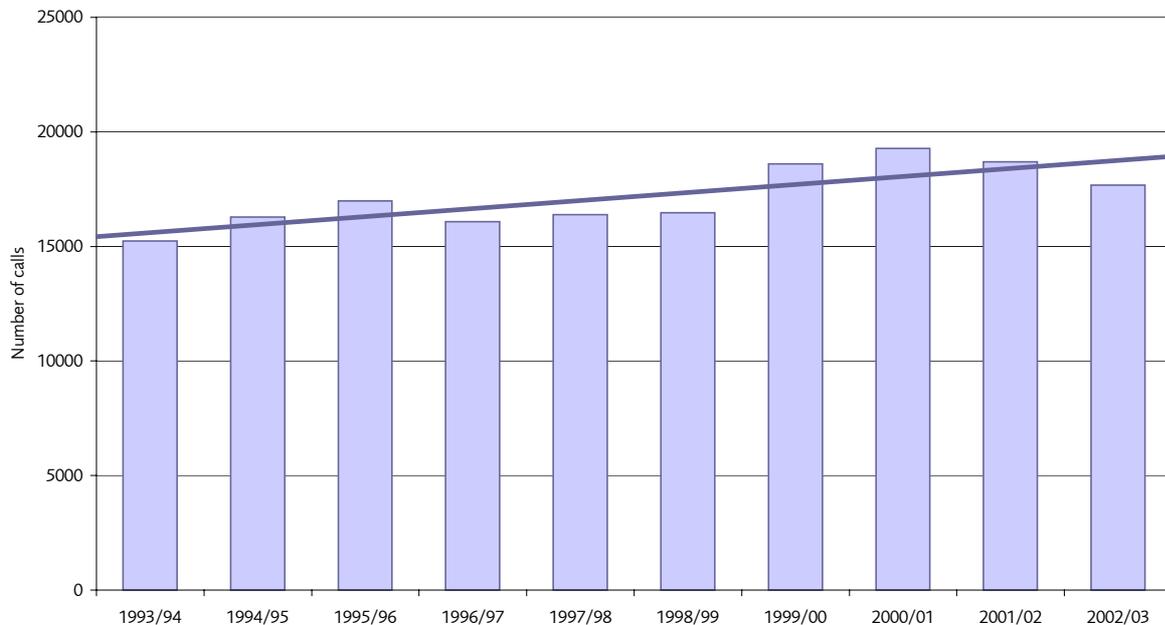
lift maintenance contracts in place, and these contractors have the expertise and equipment not only to release the people shut in the lift, but to repair the lift and bring it back into use. There have been occasions where the Brigade, while successfully releasing people shut in a lift, have caused some damage to the installation, making repairs more costly and delaying the return of the lift into service.

291. We accept that the Brigade, because of its rapid response times, is seen as the first place to turn when somebody is shut in a lift, and so we are not proposing to withdraw this service. However we believe that this is not an effective use of our skilled resources and that the responsibility for making sure there are adequate arrangements in place to release people shut in a lift rests with the owners and managers of the buildings concerned. The Brigade should come to be seen as a safety net which is available to be used only once those arrangements have broken down for some reason.

292. We therefore propose to work with building owners and managers, focusing on those buildings where we attend repeat calls for assistance, to seek to improve the arrangements for maintenance of the lifts in question to reduce the number of occasions when they break down in the first place. We will also join with them, and the lift manufacturers, to commission research into the causes of lift failures and the action which can be taken to reduce their numbers.

293. We will discuss with the owners or managers of buildings with lifts, improving the call out times within which their lift engineers should attend in the event of a breakdown. We believe that these call out arrangements should be responsive enough to deal with the vast majority of cases where people are shut in lifts; providing both a fast service to release the people affected and bringing the lift back into service as soon as possible. In this context we note that no service was available to help people shut in lifts during the recent industrial action by firefighters, and that the onus was on building owners or managers to make sure that alternative arrangements were in place.

**Releasing people shut in lifts**



294. As part of these discussions we will encourage building owners and managers to publicise the contact numbers for their lift engineers (for example, by providing details inside and outside every lift).
295. As the majority of calls for Brigade assistance to release people shut in lifts occur in social housing, we will work closely with the Association of London Government to discuss these issues and the ways in which the management of social housing can be improved to reduce the impact of repeated lift failures on the quality of life for their tenants.
296. Where these actions do not succeed in reducing repeated calls in the same building (or on the same estate) to help people shut in lifts we will publicise the failure of the owner/manager of that building/estate to maintain their lifts properly, and we will consider introducing charges for repeated call outs to provide assistance in the same building or on the same estate.
297. We also attend a number of calls where people are not simply shut in a lift which is not working, but are actually caught up in the lift machinery itself. As these types of incident represent a significant risk or injury, or even death, we will continue to treat them as a priority and to attend all such incidents.

## **(B) Flooding**

298. There is increasing evidence that global warming is increasing, and that it will result in more extreme weather patterns, including an increased risk from flooding. We therefore welcome the recent recommendation from the London Assembly that "the Environment Agency, the relevant local authorities and the emergency services join together at the earliest opportunity to undertake a flooding risk assessment for London, identifying the equipment, training and information needs for the capital. The Mayor should take the lead in ensuring such a risk assessment occurs, given his responsibilities for London's emergency

preparedness. This will no doubt include negotiations on the funding of the assessment". We are ready to play our part in carrying out such a risk assessment.

299. We will continue to provide assistance with pumping out water from flooded buildings, and on other occasions where water needs to be removed. A charge may be made for clearing flooded commercial buildings, except where there is a fire or immediate danger of fire, or immediate action is required to save life or avoid immediate and imminent risk of injury.
300. Our assistance at this type of incident can help to protect the environment, and is a significant contribution which we can make to delivery of the Mayor's environmental strategies, as well as reducing the distress experienced by those affected.
301. The government's White Paper proposes that in future the fire and rescue service will be increasingly part of the front-line response to the risks posed by natural disasters such as flooding. We hope that this will result in us being given clear powers to spend money specifically on staff, training and equipment needed to help prevent, or respond to, floods anywhere in London. While this is probably aimed more at the issue of responding to major floods, it does also reinforce the role of the fire and rescue service in helping the community to deal with the consequences of more localised flooding emergencies.

## **(C) Road traffic accidents**

302. It should be noted that for many calls to provide assistance at road traffic accidents there will be a significant risk of fire. Such occasions would be treated as a fire call and our normal approach to responding to fires would apply. Once the Brigade is in attendance and has ensured that no fire risk remains, we normally stay on to provide assistance through either rescue/release operations or making the carriageway safe.
303. The Road Traffic Act 1988 obliges motor insurers to pay a fixed charge for hospital treatment to

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people injured in accidents in which their insured are involved. There is no equivalent legislation applicable to fire authorities to enable them to make such a fixed charge in relation to the rescue services which they provide. An attempt in the mid-1990s by a number of brigades to enter into charging agreements with the relevant highways authorities, and ultimately the Department of Transport (at that time), for dealing with special services incidents on motorways and trunk roads was unsuccessful.

304. The White Paper indicates the government's intention to recognise the service's response to road accidents, however it does not propose extending to the fire and rescue the powers available to health agencies to make a fixed charge.

305. We believe that it would be appropriate for the fire and rescue service to be able to charge motor insurers for the additional work it may carry out once any risk of fire has been dealt with. We will therefore continue to lobby strongly for such powers to be extended to the service.

#### **(D) Helping people locked out of buildings**

306. Until a few years ago we attended any calls to help people who had become locked out of their buildings. However the number of such incidents had been increasing steadily (reaching a peak of some 27,000 calls a year) and was becoming a significant drain on our resources. There was also a growing number of examples of repeated calls to the same address, which became increasingly frustrating for our staff. After careful consideration it was therefore decided only to provide assistance when somebody is locked out of their buildings:

- where there is a danger of fire (for example, if a pan has been left on a lit cooker);
- where, in the opinion of the person receiving the call, there is a life threatening situation.

Where we attend, believing that there is a danger of fire or other life threatening

circumstances but on arrival we find there is no such danger, we will provide no further service and the crew will return to the station to be available for other work.

307. This new approach succeeded in reducing the unacceptable drain on our resources which this type of call had been causing: reducing the demand from its peak of some 27,000 calls a year to around 4,000. These arrangements are consistent with our approach of targeting our efforts where there is a risk of fire, another genuine emergency or other humanitarian reasons for providing assistance. We therefore do not propose to change this policy.

#### **(E) Making structures safe**

308. We attend over 4,000 calls a year where we help to make buildings or other structures (for example, scaffolding) safe. Our current policy is to charge for providing this service, once we have made sure that there is no risk of personal injury to the public.

309. The primary responsibility for ensuring the structures are safe and pose no risk to the public rests with the London boroughs and with the Metropolitan Police (who are best placed to establish a cordon to preserve public safety until the building is made safe). We therefore propose to work closely with the boroughs individually (and through the Association of London Government), and with the police to look at how the range of agencies involved can best contribute to maintaining and improving public safety and to make sure the most effective response is made to dealing with specific problems, such as dangerous scaffolding. As part of this work we will discuss with them the most appropriate role for the fire and rescue service.

310. Pending the outcome from such discussions, we will continue to respond to calls for assistance in line with our current policy.

#### **Other special services**

311. Other types of special service cover a broad range of rare, and sometimes unique,

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humanitarian support, while requiring only a modest use of our resources (some 10,000 incidents year in total – or about one incident a week for every fire engine we maintain).

312. We will therefore continue to provide all these services.

### **Helping people who are having a heart attack**

313. There is one area where we propose to trial an additional service to help improve public safety.

314. Coronary heart disease kills more than 110,000 people a year in England, of whom more than 41,000 are under the age of 75. The Department of Health has set a standard that *“People with symptoms of a possible heart attack should receive help from an individual equipped with and appropriately trained in the use of a defibrillator within eight minutes of calling for help”*.

315. We therefore propose to trial a partnership with the London Ambulance Service where both services will respond to certain calls for assistance where someone is suspected as suffering from a heart attack, in order to provide an enhanced life saving service for patients.

316. Certain fire engines will carry defibrillators (a computer controlled machine that can apply electric shock stimulus to a failing heart), and their crews will be trained in their safe use. These fire engines would then be mobilised on request from the ambulance service, at the same time as an emergency ambulance is sent. If the fire crew arrives first, they will assess the patient and, where appropriate, apply external cardiac massage using a defibrillator. They will then monitor the patient pending the arrival of a trained paramedic crew from the ambulance service who will then take over the patient and transport them to hospital.

317. Initially this co-responder project will be run as a research project to test, in real conditions, its impact on stabilising people suffering from

cardiac arrest, and the extent to which it would help to save their life.

318. Following discussions with the ambulance service, and based on their research, we propose to run this trial project in Tower Hamlets for an initial twelve-month period. This area has been chosen because of the relatively high levels of cardiac arrests in the borough, and because the current disposition of our fire engines means that we can normally attend anywhere in the borough within five to eight minutes.

319. The proposals elsewhere in this plan to reduce the unnecessary vehicle movements associated with automatic fire alarms and abandoned calls, mean that we should be able to respond to these additional calls without any adverse effect on our availability to respond to other emergencies.

320. The defibrillation equipment to be carried on our fire engines will be supplied by the ambulance service, who will also provide the main input to training those crews in the areas who will need to be able to use this equipment safely.

321. The project will be closely monitored by both the ambulance service and ourselves throughout to make sure it is achieving its objectives, without causing an unacceptable impact on other aspects of our work. At the end of the twelve-months trial we will jointly evaluate the project before deciding whether it should continue in Tower Hamlets and whether, and if so when and where, it should be extended into other parts of London.

### **Longer-term approach to special services**

322. There are some further changes we would like to consider in the longer term to the way we provide assistance at incidents other than fires. We will consider these further over the coming year, to explore both their feasibility and their potential benefits in terms of improved efficiency and the services we provide to the public.

323. We will consult further on more specific proposals which may emerge from this work, before any decisions would be taken.

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324. Currently we mobilise appliances to special services in the same way as for fires: that is the nearest available appliance is mobilised to the incident and will travel there as quickly as possible (using flashing lights and sirens). This means that other planned work such as community fire safety visits, fire safety inspections, or important training or safety checks may be postponed or cancelled in order to provide an immediate response to the call. As we develop a more sophisticated approach to assessing the relative risks at different types of incident we will consider mobilising our response in a way which reflects the actual risks to the public.
325. An immediate response would always be sent to any suspected fire, or to any other incident where there is a significant risk to public safety. However for those incidents where there is no significant risk to public safety, it may be more effective in terms of risk reduction for an appliance and crew to carry out planned training or community fire safety work rather than cancel or postpone that activity to respond to a low risk special service call. Either the appliance could then attend that call once it has completed its other planned work, or the next nearest available appliance mobilised (thereby extending attendance times).
326. We also intend to review our current arrangements whereby a certain number of appliances can be placed on second line availability so that they can carry out planned training or community fire safety work; only being called to an incident where there is a major or protracted emergency or where there is a spate of smaller incidents.
327. Driving large heavy vehicles through London's streets on an emergency response does slightly increase the risk to other road users and pedestrians, even though our drivers are well trained in driving emergency vehicles which use the horns and lights when travelling to an incident. This slightly increased risk is justifiable when responding to an incident where public safety is clearly at risk. However when responding to a call where there is no significant public risk we will consider asking our vehicles to travel at normal traffic speeds, and without using horns and lights.
328. In the longer term we will also consider whether it may be more effective and efficient to provide different types of vehicle to respond to certain special service calls. Currently we mobilise at least one fire engine and its full crew to every incident we attend, even though for some incidents not all of the crew or equipment on a fire engine may be needed to deal with that incident.
329. Provision of smaller, more specialist vehicles, with a smaller crew, may enable us to provide a better service. A smaller vehicle will have less environmental impact (and could be electrically powered), or may be able to travel more quickly through London's dense traffic. Using a smaller crew may release other firefighters' time to carry out important prevention work, training or safety checks.
330. Clearly such changes would need to be costed and worked through carefully, and fully discussed with our staff, before proposals were firmed up for consultation. However we believe that it is important to look at these more radical ideas, and to assess carefully their potential contribution to meeting our overall objectives and will start this process over the coming year.
- ### Charging for special services
331. Our current policy (see Appendix A) is to charge for:
- use of our equipment to supply or remove water;
  - clearing of flooded commercial buildings;
  - making structures safe where there is no risk of personal injury to the public;
  - any special service which is classified as 'miscellaneous';

- incidents involving chemicals/hazardous materials occurring other than in domestic locations.

332. However no charges are made at any type of incident while there remains any risk of fire.

333. We also make the following exemptions from charges:

#### **Chemical incidents**

- incidents where there is a fire or immediate danger of fire;
- incidents at domestic buildings;
- incidents where immediate action is required to save life or avoid immediate or imminent risk of injury.

#### **All other special services incidents where**

- there is danger of fire;
- elderly, disabled or infirm people are involved;
- people who are in receipt of unemployment benefits, income support or training grant;
- people who are full-time students
- there are other humanitarian or safety reasons.

334. As we develop our risk-based approach to preventing and responding to emergencies, and focus our resources on those areas where the public faces a significant risk of injury or death, we will look at whether this exemptions policy needs to be changed, to reduce our commitment to turn out to incidents where the public is at

little or no risk. We will also consider the practical implications of any changes, both on us as an organisation, and on those individuals who may be affected. The outcome of this review, and proposals for change to the current arrangements will be set out when the plan is rolled forward next year.

335. We will also keep our procedures for raising charges under review to make sure the policy is applied consistently and fairly.

#### **Level of charges**

336. The current year level of charges is £256 (+VAT) per incident at domestic buildings and £256 (+VAT) per appliance, per hour (or part of) at commercial buildings.

337. We have reviewed these sums, on the basis that the charges should be sufficient to cover our costs including administration and other overheads, plus a reasonable profit. We have also factored in the cost of the recent pay award for firefighters, linked to modernisation of the service.

338. On this basis we propose to increase these charges with effect from 1 April 2004 to £274 plus VAT.

339. We will then adjust them annually in line with inflation.



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## Part 4

### Our people

340. We can only deliver the improvements proposed in this plan, through the work of our staff, and therefore we will continue to do all we can to develop and retain a high quality, professional workforce; one which continues to attract the respect of both the general public and the other agencies with which we work. However the new approach proposed in this plan, and some of the longer-term developments which will flow from it, means that there need to be a number of changes in the roles and responsibilities of our staff. This in turn means that some changes to way in which we currently do things are essential.
341. This was envisaged when the recent pay dispute was settled with a significant pay increase agreed for our operational staff, linked to modernisation of the service and increased flexibility in working arrangements. There remain a number of details to be settled about implementation of the package agreed to resolve the dispute. We will do what we can to help settle these details quickly and harmoniously.
342. We believe that the approach agreed by all parties to settle the dispute, will provide the opportunity to work constructively with our staff, and their trades unions, to improve the services we can provide, while also improving job satisfaction for staff and providing more opportunities to achieve a reasonable balance between their working and private lives.
343. We will continue to work closely with the fire service employers, other fire authorities around the country and the Fire Brigades Union, to revise and update the conditions of service for firefighters (set out in what is known as the *Grey Book*). This will maintain a national framework of conditions of service linked to national pay scales, while increasing the flexibility for local fire authorities, in discussion with the trade unions, to develop local solutions geared to improving community safety locally and reflecting the particular needs and circumstances of the communities they serve. These national discussions will also address the scope for moving away from the current system of single point entry for firefighters (whereby all uniformed staff join the service as firefighters and can then progress through the ranks).
344. Agreement has been reached nationally to introduce an Integrated Personal Development System which will be at the heart of how we recruit, train, develop, promote and assess our staff. This system identifies the core job roles which firefighters need to carry out, and in what areas they need to be competent to work effectively in those roles. Much of the development work for this national system was carried out in London, and we will continue to support its development and implementation nationally, as well as in London.
345. A key element of this system is to make sure that our rank structure reflects the number of core roles identified. Currently there are more ranks in the service than there are core roles (for example in London we have officers holding different ranks acting as watch managers). As part of the agreement reached when the recent pay dispute was settled and an overall pay increase agreed, we will now move as quickly as possible to a new role based salary structure for our operational staff, assimilating all our existing operational staff into the new structure. The details about how this will be done, will be discussed in full with the trade unions, in line with our agreed arrangements.
346. We will also consider developing local arrangements to make additional payments to recognise skill shortages or special skills which particular staff may develop. This may cover both traditional skills, such as driving emergency vehicles, where there is a skill shortage, and the

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- development of new skills for example in community engagement (including language skills etc), development and maintenance of successful partnerships, or other initiatives delivering improvements in community safety.
347. We will introduce, after consultation with the trade unions, arrangements for pre-arranged overtime to be worked where this can help us improve our services in a cost effective way. An example of a situation where such payments would be helpful, is our outreach work to encourage people from groups who have traditionally not seen the fire service as a career to consider applying to become a firefighter.
348. Our plans have developed on the basis that there will be more flexible working patterns available for some staff than the current systems allows. For example, an increased focus on community engagement and preventative work, means that our staff need to be available when local people or businesses are ready and able to work with us. This means that much of such work will need to be carried out during normal working hours (for businesses) and in the early evening or at weekends if we are to engage with members of the public who are also working.
349. We will therefore develop over the coming months proposals for a range of different working patterns available to firefighters. The development of more flexible working patterns was a key part of the modernisation of the service which formed an essential part of, and justification for, the recent pay award for firefighters.
350. There will always be a need for a core shift system which maintains 24-hour cover and so there will remain plenty of opportunity for those existing firefighters who wish to do so to remain on their present shift pattern. However, we also want to look at ways in staff can:
- work part time;
  - focus on day time, or evening shifts but reduce the commitment to night time working;
  - develop more flexible call out arrangements;
  - work in more flexible ways so that they are not necessarily based at a single fire station or local office, but could move to different parts of London to address the particular risks faced by different communities.
351. Such different working patterns would provide a range of opportunities for staff to adjust their working patterns with their differing domestic commitments and help to increase the flexibility available to achieve a work-life balance which best suits them.
352. We understand that many of our staff do find the current shift pattern attractive, and are concerned about any perceived threat to it. Our objective will be to develop more flexible patterns by agreement, and through recruiting new staff on a more varied menu of working patterns, and we will try to allow as many staff as possible who wish to do so to stay on the current 2:2:4 shift pattern (two days on; two nights on followed by a four day break from work). However we remain committed to using more flexible working patterns where this can help to improve community safety, improve working conditions for staff or help us to operate more efficiently and effectively and deliver better value for money for the community. We would open up these opportunities to those of our existing staff who do want to work different shift patterns.
353. As part of implementation of the overall pay award, we will also review the way in which the current flexible working system works for our officers, to improve the way in which we use our staff to deliver services to the public, to look at how we can reduce the burden on our officers (in terms of the hours on which they are on call and – in some cases – the need for them to camp out away from home in order to be available should they be called out to deal with an emergency).
354. It is unavoidable that the recent industrial action will have had an impact on staff morale and

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relations between managers and staff. However now the dispute has been resolved, we will do all we can to develop a positive and constructive industrial relations climate so that staff and managers can work together to improve community safety. We will need to look at our local industrial relations procedures in the light of the review being undertaken of the national procedures in accordance with the national agreement reached with the FBU and as outlined in the government's White Paper. One example may be the formal recognition and participation in our negotiating and consultative machinery of other trade unions.

355. However, inevitably management and the trades unions will not always agree on everything. We will therefore work to put in place effective and speedy disputes resolution machinery, which enjoys the confidence of both parties.

### **Health and safety and the environment**

356. We will continue to do everything we can to secure the health and safety of our staff, especially those operational firefighters who may be exposed to hostile environments as part of their work to protect the community.

357. We will work closely with the Health & Safety Executive to make sure we put in place safe systems of working for all aspects of work; and we will continue to work closely with colleagues around the country and with the Audit Commission and with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire Services to make sure best practice is exchanged and that we can learn from the experience of others.

358. We have developed, as part of our safety management system, a comprehensive inventory of the risks associated with our operational activities. We maintain a central register of the risk assessments we have carried out against that inventory and have developed comprehensive guidance for managers on health and safety issues.

359. We will continue to provide specialist health and safety advice within the organisation and have recently overhauled our systems to collect information about all safety events (given that as much can be learned from near misses as from actual accidents).

360. We have well established and sophisticated arrangements in place to investigate those accidents which do happen, and to take any necessary action to prevent similar accidents happening again in the future.

361. We have just completed a multi-million pound investment to provide a real fire training facility at our training centre in Southwark. This facility (which has been designed to be environmentally friendly and thereby to minimise the impact of its operation on our neighbours) will provide a realistic training environment for both our recruits and more experienced staff in a controlled environment which minimises the risks of accident or injury during such training.

362. We are also working with other fire authorities across the country to develop the next generation of personal protective equipment for firefighters. This will be an integrated system looking at the combined impact of workwear, uniform, and protective firefighting equipment on the protection of firefighters from heat and flames, and from the risks of heat exhaustion. The joint procurement of such equipment by most of the fire authorities in the country will both ensure compatibility of protection where neighbouring brigades may be working together and will also deliver significant economies of scale.

363. The government has supported this innovative project, which is being run from London, as an excellent example of the benefits which can be derived from public/private partnerships and from collaboration between fire authorities has approved the project as part of its PFI programme.

364. As part of our approach to managing the impact of our activities on the environment we have

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developed an environmental management system. This records the potential impacts which we may have on the environment and what we are doing to reduce any adverse impacts. This is supported by a three-year action plan which sets

out our programme of work to protect the environment and identifies the contribution which this can make to achieving the Mayor's environmental priorities.