



Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service

Operational Response Strategy 2021/24



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Foreword

This Response Strategy is based on national guidance and locally derived risk assessments that assist us in making decisions about the distribution of resources for those occasions when emergency assistance is required and we are called to help. Using this method we seek to ensure that the majority of our resources are located where the risk is and an appropriate immediate response is made to all emergency calls. This initial response is pre-determined according to the type of incident.

The nature and range of emergency incidents that we respond to has changed in recent years. Our aim is to ensure that when emergencies do happen, we are able to respond in the most effective and safest way to protect and limit damage to life, property and the environment. To achieve this, we will continue to be innovative and flexible in the way that we manage and deal with emergencies.

We recognise that it is very rare for us to respond to an emergency on our own and we will continue to carry out joint planning with our partners to ensure we are prepared to deal with all types of emergency on a local, regional and national scale.

The Challenge

The Service maintains a path of continuous improvement, delivering services aligned to the broader Cumbria County Council (CCC) Plan, our own Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and our strategic annual Service Plan. A cyclical process of assessment, review, and feedback by, Her Majesty's Inspectorate Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Service ensures that the Service maintains focus and strives for improvement across all areas of operational response.

Feedback is reviewed, and we challenge ourselves to ensure that we remain efficient and effective and a learning organisation. We will continue to develop a range of operational and other change proposals that will ensure that CFRS can continue to effectively deliver all its statutory duties and strive towards excellence. This Operational Response Strategy has been developed to set out how we will deliver this commitment. The actions and changes set out in this Strategy will be predominantly managed and delivered by the Cluster based Service Delivery teams.

We will always ensure that when we are required to respond, we will do so in a timely manner with the right staff, who have the right skills, the right equipment and the right support.

One of our key priorities must be to always continue to deliver a highly effective and efficient operational response capability. There is a need to better understand the location of



resources and challenge our approach to deploying those resources concurrently increasing our flexibility to respond to the different kinds of emergencies we face.

The development of technology is increasing at rates never seen before, we must be prepared to challenge our approach to what has gone before, and think differently about the resources and tactics we employ to deal with and manage emergencies. Accordingly, this new approach must embrace a preparedness to be more adventurous in learning from operational incidents and to think about different approaches to dealing with emergencies.

This Response Strategy ensures that CFRS remains committed to and focused on the following priorities:

- To aspire to a strong and inclusive culture in CFRS that is positive to meet the challenges we face in the future, serving the diverse communities of Cumbria and keeping them safe.
- CFRS are committed to ensuring diverse communities in the county receive services that meet their needs.
- Employing and utilising appropriate duty systems and flexible arrangements to ensure the appropriate level of skilled Firefighters are available.
- Providing an appropriate level and distribution of emergency response vehicles and equipment.
- Providing an appropriate response to fires and other emergencies.
- Ensuring our Firefighters are highly skilled and trained.
- Maintaining high standards of operational preparedness and Firefighter safety.
- Ensuring our operational capabilities are resilient and are continually assessed against foreseeable and relevant risks.
- Maintaining robust risk records.
- Making sure our emergency vehicles, operational and personal protective equipment are fit for purpose.
- Improving our ability to respond by introducing new operational capabilities and innovative new equipment and appliances to support our operational needs.
- Maintaining effective cross-border arrangements and an ability to respond effectively to regional and national larger scale incidents when required.
- Continuing to review usage and to develop Fire Stations as a focus for the community.
- Ensuring that degradation planning is in place underpinned by business continuity arrangements and that the Service is well placed to respond in the advent of a regional or national emergency.
- Responding to and safeguarding the cultural, heritage and built environment in Cumbria.
- Responding to and safeguarding the environment in Cumbria and particularly the risk of Wildfire in specific habitats in Cumbria.
- To continue to explore partnerships and joint arrangements with other emergency services such as Emergency Medical Response.
- To provide appropriate resources to ensure our 'weight of attack' in response to emergency situations is effective.
- Ensure that outcomes delivered by this Response Strategy are measurable, effectively reviewed and evaluated.

- CFRS will also enter into 'Memoranda of Understanding' (MoU) and mutual assistance arrangements, where it is clear that such an agreement is likely to better support response arrangements that ensure the safety of the communities in the County. Any such MoU will clearly recognise the role of the participating agencies.

The Response Strategy is a key driver within the Service's IRMP and will be delivered against the corporate objectives and the key performance indicators.

Key Drivers

There are a number of reasons why our key strategies are so important and drive our business and our approach.

Our four core strategies are a vital pillar in our planning framework and each supports the Council Plan and CFRS IRMP 2019-23. The IRMP sets out how we will deliver our services through effective Prevention, Protection and Response arrangements, using our key asset, our staff. Each of the three areas, along with our People Strategy contain several key priorities and related aims.

Legislative Requirements

There are a number of statutory functions and duties that we must carry out according to law. The core legislation is summarised below:

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

This is the core legislation for all FRS and it details legal powers and responsibilities of Fire Authorities. A key element of the Act is that it makes the production of a National Framework document by the Secretary of State mandatory. Fire Authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions.

National Framework Document

The Framework document sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for the Fire and Rescue Service. It states:

- The Government's expectations for the Fire and Rescue Service.
- What Fire Authorities are expected to do.
- The support the Government will provide in helping them meet these objectives.

The Framework is intended to be strategic and provides the foundation on which to build local solutions, giving Fire Authorities flexibility to meet the needs of their communities.

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

The Act is a key piece of legislation and arose in response to the terrorist threat, as well as a number of other civil emergencies. It imposes a series of duties on local bodies (known as Category 1 Responders) including a requirement to assess the risk of an emergency occurring and to maintain plans for responding to an emergency. The Fire and Rescue Service is a Category 1 Responder.

The Act also creates a broader 'concept' of an 'emergency'.

To satisfy this legislation, Local Resilience Forums have been established. These Forums must establish and maintain effective multi-agency arrangements for major emergencies and minimise the impact of those emergencies on the public, property and environment. CFRS plays a full and active role in the Cumbria Resilience Forum.

Key Objectives

To ensure the Response Priorities are fully serviced, a suite of Response objectives have been developed:

Objective 1: Operational Response

The Service will monitor and publish operational response performance when responding to incidents to ensure we are sending appropriate resources, efficiently and effectively deal with the risks presented in a safe and controlled manner. As part of this process the Service will commission an independent review of resource locations ensuring the optimisation of the fleet and the weight of response along with maintaining special appliance availability.

Our emergency response standard is the maximum length of time we think it is acceptable to take to attend an incident; measured from the time of dispatch of fire engine resources to the time they arrive on scene. We will ensure that we send the fastest and most appropriate response to all incidents.

The Service has set a single response standard across the County of 10 minutes to all 'primary' property fires, and a second standard of 15 minutes for all other incidents, aiming to achieve this level of performance on 80% of occasions. We continue to focus prevention and protection arrangements around known higher risk communities.

CFRS will work closely with partner agencies, sharing appropriate risk information, and providing our operational crews with the best equipment, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and procedures to enable them to carry out their role effectively, whilst reducing risk as far as possible. In providing our operational response, we will strive to mitigate the effects of fires and other emergency occurrences on the environment.

Firefighting is an inherently dangerous activity. To ensure that our Firefighters remain safe whilst providing a first-class service to our community, we will ensure that CFRS meet all of the legislative requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act. In addition, we will also meet all of the moral requirements for maintaining a fit, safe and healthy workforce thus enabling staff to deal with the often urgent need to carry out rescues or mitigate disaster.

In addition, the Service will review the current disposition of specialist resources across the County according to risk.



Objective 2: Planning

CFRS will plan ahead, assessing existing, new and emerging risks to ensure that we have the right skills, that are in the right place at the right time with the best equipment available to provide the most effective response to emergency situations when our communities need help. Operational intelligence relating to risks within our communities will be collated and made available to all operational crews, leading to improved crew safety, with the aim of reducing any Firefighter injuries. We will support multi-agency emergency planning and response to major incidents, and continually review our capabilities across this area.

We will plan for any future major developments affecting community safety in Cumbria by making our operational response, prevention and protection activities proportionate to evolving risk. We are proactively engaged in any planning development via the CCC Resilience Unit and through our CFRS Fire Protection department.

Objective 3: Command and Control



CFRS will ensure that our communities can access our emergency response through a robust and resilient Control Room provision based at Warrington in Cheshire, continuing an effective mobilising and communications system for the co-ordination of our operational response.

We will continue to train and assess Incident Commanders ensuring the currency of skills, including their ability to undertake dynamic and risk assessed decisions, in line with

National Operational Guidance and Standard Operating Procedures. Incident Commanders will have a good awareness and understanding of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) ensuring where multi agency incidents occur there is joint understanding.

CFRS are committed to ensuring commanders are exposed to multi-agency training events including exercises in line with the JESIP principles. CFRS will ensure that effective and robust methods of incident command are used at all operational incidents, making certain that appropriately trained officers are qualified and assessed at; Operational, Tactical and Strategic levels of command and are available to respond to incidents as appropriate.

Objective 4: Interoperability

CFRS will work closely with our key partner agencies to ensure that we fully understand each other's capabilities and limitations and command and control procedures and can communicate with one another effectively on the incident ground.



We have fully embedded the principles that underpin the JESIP, and work together via the Cumbria Resilience Forum to ensure a common understanding and shared situational awareness exists across all responding Category 1 and 2 agencies, when dealing with major incidents such as wide area flooding.

We are collaborating closely with blue light colleagues, looking at innovative ways of enhancing the emergency service available to our communities, whilst at the same time realising greater efficiencies through working together.

Objective 5: Effective and efficient resourcing

In Cumbria we have 38 Fire Stations comprise of 6 x Wholetime, (4 with additional On-Call crew support), 2 Day Crewed (with additional On-Call crew support) and 30 On-Call Fire Stations. The 45 fire engines located across the County are crewed by staff using a range of duty systems which enables us to provide an immediate response when called upon. We train and equip our Firefighters to ensure they have the right equipment, skills and knowledge to provide an immediate, efficient and effective response to our community.



Wholetime Firefighters

There are currently 8 Stations that operate either wholly or in part with staff working the Wholetime duty system (full time Firefighters). The traditional model of crewing Wholetime Fire Stations has been in place for some 40 years and is based on a ‘2 days, 2 nights, 4 days off’ duty system.

On-Call Firefighters

On-Call (part time) Firefighters are a vital part of CFRS. Nationwide, approximately 18,000 On-Call Firefighters provide efficient, cost effective and reliable Fire and Rescue cover to around 60% of the UK, and across Cumbria they provide cover at 36 of our 38 Fire Stations. Due to the challenges in recruitment and retention of On-Call Firefighters nationally, including competition with the Reserve Forces, and in particular in small rural towns and villages, extending the time limit that a Firefighter is allowed to attend the Fire Station in the event of an emergency may increase the availability of the fire engine to respond and therefore provide an overall improved response to local communities.

Conclusion

This Strategy provides a framework in which Operational Response arrangements can be delivered. It reinforces the important role CFRS play in responding and supporting the communities across Cumbria.

This Strategy will be constantly reviewed to ensure its effectiveness.

