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Sir Graham Meldrum CBE OStJ QFSM Duniv FIFireE CCMI
HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Zone 17/D
Portland House
Stag Place
London SW1E 5LP

E-Mail: graham.meldrum@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

Enquiries: 020 7944 6923

Web Site: www.odpm.gov.uk

Date: 23 October 2003

To: All Chief Fire Officers

Dear Chief Officer

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER LETTER 4/2003

This letter deals with matters described briefly below. More detailed information is contained in the relevant "Items" attached.

A FIRE SERVICE EXAMINATIONS, APPOINTMENT AND PROMOTION REGULATIONS AND THE INTEGRATED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

This item sets out planned changes to promotion regulations and promotion examinations.

B STANDARDS

This item details various new, revised or amended British and European and International Standards.

C DANGERS OF CELLULOSE NITRATE FILM

This item introduces a new HSE publication: The dangers of cellulose nitrate film. The publication is aimed at private individuals and voluntary groups who have or find old film in domestic or other non-workplace premises.

D EXTENSION OF LARGE SINGLE-STOREY RETAIL BUILDINGS

This item updates the information issued under DCOL 7/2001 item B following a number of inquiries from fire brigades seeking further guidance and/or clarification on the appropriate standard of fire precautions in these buildings.

E IPDS DEVELOPMENT MODULE DATABASE

This item provides information on the IPDS Development Modules Database

F FIRE SERVICE MANUAL, VOLUME 2 FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS, ACETYLENE CYLINDER INCIDENTS AND NATURAL GAS INCIDENTS

Following the publication of the above manual two errors have been identified, which require amendment.

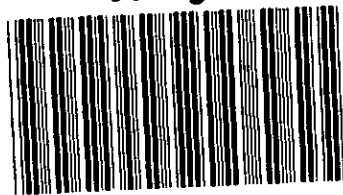
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Yours faithfully

Sir Graham Meldrum

SIR GRAHAM MELDRUM CBE

**The Fire Service
College**



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FIRE SERVICE EXAMINATIONS, APPOINTMENT AND PROMOTION REGULATIONS AND THE INTEGRATED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

1. The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) is due to be implemented with effect from 7 November 2003. This has implications for the examinations system administered by the Fire Service Examinations Board and for the way individuals are assessed for competence and for promotion.
2. Under IPDS, competence within a role will be assessed through workplace assessment. A circular on workplace assessment will be issued shortly.
3. The current Appointments and Promotion Regulations 1978 which require people to have passed statutory examinations before seeking promotion are not appropriate to the IPDS. These regulations are due to be amended to reflect IPDS principles by the end of the year. Thereafter, individuals seeking to access the next role will be assessed solely against the potential to perform to the national occupational standard for that role and will not need to have passed current promotion examinations. To provide an orderly transition to the new system and to give due recognition to individuals who have passed or are studying to complete examinations, transitional arrangements have been agreed with the Fire Services Examination Board (FSEB). These are set out below.
4. Within IPDS, an Assessment Development Centres (ADC) process will be used to assess potential for the next role. Guidance on the fully developed ADC process within IPDS will not be issued until well into 2004. However, interim guidance and an interim recommended assessment process will be made available in late 2003 for use after the amendment of the appointment and promotion regulations. Part of the ADC process (both the interim and the full process) is expected to be an initial sift. Whilst there is no direct correlation between possession of statutory promotion examinations and success in the ADC process that supports the IPDS, individuals who have passes in all written papers will be given recognition at the sift stage within the ADC process.
5. Individuals with passes in Part II practical examinations, will also be permitted to include the relevant content of the practical examinations as evidence in their personal development records (see FSC 11/2003). (It should be noted though that, evidence from examinations will need to be supplemented by evidence from workplace activity in order to demonstrate competence against any element of the National Occupational Standards.)
6. Following the amendments to the Appointments and Promotion Regulations, the existing statutory examinations will begin to be phased out. The proposed dates for the final Part II examinations; and for written examinations for candidates who already have partial passes are as follows:

<i>Leading Firefighters'</i>	<i>Part II Practical Examination</i>	<i>March-April 2004</i>
<i>Sub-Officers'</i>	<i>Part II Practical Examination</i>	<i>April-June 2004</i>
<i>Leading Firefighters'</i>	<i>Part I Written Examination</i>	<i>September 2004</i>
<i>Sub-Officers'</i>	<i>Part I Written Examination</i>	<i>October 2004</i>
<i>Station Officers'</i>	<i>Written Examination</i>	<i>February 2005</i>

7. After the dates set out above, people who have passed at least one paper but who have been unsuccessful in obtaining an overall pass in all papers of the written examinations will be able to re-sit papers in accordance with current arrangements. Subject to demand, the FSEB expects to hold examinations for people wishing to re-sit exams at 6 monthly intervals until the following dates:

<i>Leading Firefighters'</i>	<i>Part I Written Examination</i>	<i>September 2005 or, in appeal cases, February 2006</i>
<i>Sub-Officers'</i>	<i>Part I Written Examination</i>	<i>September 2005 or, in appeal cases, February 2006</i>
<i>Station Officers'</i>	<i>Written Examination</i>	<i>February 2006 or, in appeal cases, September 2006</i>

8. Further information on examinations will be issued by the FSEB shortly. Further information on the ADC process and promotion within IPDS will be issued later in the year. In the meantime, any fire and rescue service needing further advice should contact one of the following people.

Technical Enquiries Jan Ozimkowski, Head of People Management and Development Group, Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, ODPM
jan.ozimkowski@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

FSEB David Stanley, Secretary to FSEB
david.stanley@lg-employers.gov.uk

IPDS Hub Juliet Moore - IPDS Hub Co-ordinator
jmoore@fireservicecollege.ac.uk

Project Plan Derek Johnson, IPDS project manager, ODPM
derek.johnson@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

Scotland Robert Virtue, Director of Fire Service Training – Scottish Executive
bob.virtue@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

David Boyle, Personnel and Training HMFSI (Scotland)
Dave.boyle@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Policy Issues Sheila Ramsamy or Christine Symes
 HR - Development, Fire Directorate, ODPM
Sheila.Ramsamy@odpm.gsi.gov.uk
Christine.Symes@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

STANDARDS

Detailed below are various new, revised or amended British and European and International Standards.

BS EN 12094:2003 – FIXED FIREFIGHTING SYSTEMS COMPONENTS OR GAS EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS –

Part 2: Requirements and test methods for non-electrical automatic control and delay devices.

This new European Standard was published and came into effect on 8th September 2003.

This European Standard specifies requirements and test methods for non-electrical automatic control devices incorporating non-electrical delay devices for CO₂ inert gas- or halo-carbon-gas fire extinguishing systems.

The Standard applies to devices that may be triggered by:

- Automatic fire detection installation
- Electrical control device
- Non-electrical special fire detector
- Manual triggering device or
- Combination of the above.

Where applicable the requirements and test methods also apply to separate non-electrical delay devices.

This European Standard covers devices that are powered pneumatically, mechanically or by a combination of both.

BS EN 12845:2003 – Fixed firefighting systems – Automatic sprinkler systems – Design, installation and maintenance.

This new European Standard was published and came into effect on 26th August 2003

This standard specifies requirements and gives recommendations for the design, installation and maintenance of fixed fire sprinklers systems in buildings and industrial plant, and particular requirements for sprinkler systems, which are integral to measures for the protection of life.

This standard covers only the types of sprinkler specified in EN 12259-1

The requirements and recommendations of this standard are also applicable to any addition, extension, repair or other modification to an existing sprinkler system. They are not applicable to water spray or deluge.

The Standard covers the classification of hazards, provision of water supplies, components to be used, installation and testing of the system, maintenance, and the extension of existing systems, and identifies construction details of buildings which are the minimum necessary for satisfactory performance of sprinkler systems complying with this standard.

This standard does not cover water supplies to systems other than sprinklers. Its requirements can be used as guidance for other fixed fire fighting extinguishing systems, however, provided that any specific requirements for other fire fighting extinguishing supplies are taken into account.

The requirements are not valid for automatic sprinkler systems on ships, in aircraft, on vehicles and mobile fire appliances or for below ground systems in the mining industry.

BS ISO 17724: 2003 – Graphical symbols – Vocabulary

This new International Standard was published and came into effect on 3rd September 2003.

This international Standard defines terms relating to graphical symbols, principally symbols for public information and use on equipment and safety signs. It does not include terms related to graphical symbols for diagrams (technical product documentation symbols).

The definitions are intended to serve as a basis for consideration by those concerned with producing new standards or revising existing standards.

BS 7346-4:2003 – Components for smoke and heat control systems –

Part 4: Functional recommendations and calculation methods for smoke and heat exhaust ventilation systems, employing steady-state design fires – Code of Practice.

This new British Standard was published and came into effect on 29th August 2003.

This part of BS 7346 gives recommendations and guidance of functional and calculation methods for smoke and heat exhaust ventilation systems for steady-state design fires. It is intended for a variety of building types and applications, including single-storey buildings, mezzanine floors, warehouses with palletised or racked storage, shopping malls, atria and complex buildings, car parks, places of entertainment and public assembly and unpartitioned space within multi-storey buildings.

This standard does not include any functional recommendations for design parameters where the primary purpose of the smoke and heat ventilation system (SHEVS) is to assist fire fighting.

Such functional recommendations need to be agreed with the fire service responsible for the building in question. The calculation procedures set out in the annexes of this document can be used to design the SHEVS to meet whatever recommendations have been agreed.

This standard does not cover the following: -

- smoke clearance, where smoke is exhausted from a building after the fire has been suppressed;
- cross-ventilation, where wind-induced or fan-induced air currents sweep smoke through and out of the building, usually as part of fire-fighting operational procedures;
- ventilation of stairwells, which usually represents a special application of smoke clearance and which does not necessarily protect the continued use of the stairwell;
- fully-involved fires.

BS EN 12101 – 2:2003

**Smoke and Heat Control Systems -
Part 2: Specification for natural smoke and heat exhaust ventilators**

This new European Standard was published and came into effect on 5th August 2003.

This European Standard specifies component requirements and gives test methods for natural smoke and heat exhaust ventilators that are intended to be installed in a natural smoke and heat exhaust system.

The standard covers the design requirements, testing procedures, performance requirements, installation and maintenance information for the ventilator.

Contact for each of the above standards

T/HMI Mick Eady Tel: 020 7944 5587 Email mike.eady@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

NOTE: The context of this Standard has not been checked with relative information may be cited in fire service manuals. Brigades should ensure that personnel currently holding reference material, e.g. fire safety manuals are made aware of these changes in order that existing information can be updated as appropriate.

DANGERS OF CELLULOSE NITRATE FILM

This item introduces a new HSE publication: The dangers of cellulose nitrate film. The publication is aimed at private individuals and voluntary group who have or find old film in domestic or other non-workplace premises.

1. It gives advice on
2. How to identify cellulose nitrate film and negatives
3. Why cellulose nitrate film is hazardous
4. How to recognise signs of decomposition
5. What to do if you have cellulose nitrate film, and
6. Contact points for information and advice.

Free copies of the publication can be obtained from Marion Dale (HSE) telephone contact 0151 951 3214 or it can be downloaded from the HSE website on www.hse.gov.uk/spd/dsear.htm

HMFSI contact

T/HMI Mick Eady Tel: 020 7944 5587 Email mike.eady@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

EXTENSION OF LARGE SINGLE-STOREY RETAIL BUILDINGS

There have been a number of inquiries from fire brigades seeking further guidance and/or clarification on the appropriate standard of fire precautions in these buildings. These inquiries relate to the limitations on the size of compartments in retail premises as recommended in the guidance to the Building Regulations, Approved Document B, 2000 edition (as amended).

A Dear Chief Officer letter was originally issued on this subject in 2001 (DCOL 7/2001 item B).

However, due to the continuing issues being raised, it is considered that further information would be useful.

Background

1. The rationale in amending the Building Regulations Approved Document B, 1991 was that there had been a number of high-profile fires in large supermarkets and DIY type outlets leading to concerns about public and firefighter safety. These concerns, together with the expanding development of large undivided retail buildings, the consequential larger occupant use and the potential impact on the fire service in carrying out search and rescue in the event of a fire, resulted in the guidance in Approved Document B – recommending a maximum compartment size of 2000m².
2. A number of factors were taken into account in making this recommendation, including:
 - the potential for loss of life in this building type was high due to the large number of people that may be present within such a retail premises;
 - the occupants would be unfamiliar with the surroundings in an emergency; and
 - the levels of management control that could be placed on members of the public was not as robust as that which could be placed on staff.
3. Historically compartmentation has provided the desired fire safety feature in many buildings and the rationale is explained in Approved Document B. The purpose of compartmentation is twofold:
 - to prevent rapid fire spread which could trap occupants, and
 - to reduce the chance of fires becoming large, on the basis that large fires are more dangerous, not only to occupants and fire service personnel, but to people in the vicinity of the building.
4. In more recent times, the trend in the design of buildings, including retail premises has been to expand the boundaries of building envelopes and create large open spaces within them. This can be acceptable if it is demonstrated that any alternative solution that is put forward, meets the requirements of both Schedule 1 of the Building Regulations and the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations, which are set in functional terms.
5. In the majority of the premises in question, a fire certificate issued under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 would also be in place. The conditions of that certificate would be based on the fire safety standards applicable at the time of issue which would normally comply with the appropriate supporting guidance documents, such as the Home Office Guides, Approved Document B or British Standards.

Enforcement

6. Where there is an application for an extension to an existing store, both the Building Regulations and Fire Precautions legislation will apply.
7. It is for the building control body (BCB) to determine whether the proposed and/ or completed building works comply with the Building Regulations and that such work does not adversely affect standards in the existing building. It is the responsibility of the fire authority to ensure that any proposed alterations to a building do not adversely affect existing standards of fire precautions and that ultimately the fire precautions in the extended building are appropriate in the circumstances.
8. The fire authority is reminded that in the case of a building where a fire certificate is in force, then the owner/occupier of that building is required to obtain the approval of the fire authority in respect of any proposed material alterations to it, prior to carrying out those alterations. The fire authority will give its comments on the proposals to the owner/occupier and at the same time inform the owner/occupier that they should consult with the BCB prior to carrying out the alterations.
9. If the owner/occupier and the BCB agree any proposals prior to obtaining the necessary approval from the fire authority, the fire authority is reminded that the agreement does not override the requirement under the Fire Precautions Act for the owner/occupier to obtain approval from the fire authority in the first instance. The legislative requirement to consult between the fire authority and the BCB is identified in 10 below.
10. To ensure that responsibilities of both enforcing bodies are taken into account a number of different consultation processes exist. These include the requirement to consult under Section 16 of the Fire Precautions Act, Regulation 13 of the Building (Approved Inspectors Etc) Regulations 2000 and Regulation 17 of the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 (as amended).
11. Fire authorities should satisfy themselves that an acceptable fire risk assessment under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations has been carried out. This is a requirement on the employer and other persons responsible irrespective of the requirements of the other legislation.
12. Consequently, requirements to improve the fire safety precautions in such buildings, so that they are reasonable in the circumstances, are not barred by any earlier approval given. If it is considered that where the conditions within the existing store are so dangerous as to affect the life safety of persons within, enforcement action by the enforcing authority (the Fire Authority) should be taken. It will be for the enforcing authority to determine whether such enforcement action is taken under the Fire Precautions Act or the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations.
13. It must be emphasised that whether the fire precautions proposed or provided are appropriate, and whether consultation has been undertaken as required by the Fire Precautions Act, is a matter initially for the relevant enforcing authority, but ultimately for the courts. All proposals must be considered on their individual merits, on a case by case basis.
14. Therefore the procedures in the Building Regulations and Fire Safety Procedural Guidance document should be followed. Where these procedures fail for any reason, for example, an agreed solution is not forthcoming at the consultation stage, and informal guidance from the ODPM is not considered necessary by the BCB, then brigades can only enforce any requirement they consider necessary through their own legislation.

General

It is suggested that when reviewing applications, fire authorities take account of the following points:

- The boundaries that the BCB works within when applying the Building Regulations, and that it is the BCB that interprets whether the applicant is complying with the functional requirement of those Regulations.

- That the BCB recognises the applicant may need prior approval from the fire authority when carrying out alterations to an existing building and, therefore, ensures that application for such approval has been, or is being, obtained.
- That when responding to any consultation, the appropriate fire legislation is clearly stated together with any relevant data to support the comments.
- That consideration is given to alternative solutions that may be deemed acceptable, that is, compartmentation, sprinkler protection or some other acceptable solution. Whatever the acceptable criterion is, it should be designed, installed and maintained correctly and be sufficiently robust to be effective when an emergency occurs. This will of course include any management system that has been proposed as part of the solution. The Building Regulations supporting guidance (AD B) pre-supposes that when buildings are built in accordance with that guidance, that good management will be in place.
- When considering a solution the alternative approach should take account of fire growth rates in addition to means of escape in case of fire, as one will impact on the other through acceptable tolerability criteria.
- That a comprehensive audit trail of areas agreed upon and those where common ground could not be found is maintained.

Some useful website addresses are listed below for further information.

ODPM	www.odpm.gov.uk
ODPM Fire Safety	www.safety.odpm.gov.uk/fire/index.htm
AD B	
AD B - 2002 amendments	
Procedural Guidance	www.safety.odpm.gov.uk/bregs/brpub/firesafety/index.htm

IPDS DEVELOPMENT MODULE DATABASE

The IPDS Development Modules Database can now be accessed from the IPDS page at the Scottish Fire Service College website: www.Scottish-fireservicecollege.org

There will also be a link to the database from the Fire Service College: www.fireservicecollege.ac.uk

The database includes information both on national standards and on development modules (or topics) for roles within the service.

FIRE SERVICE MANUAL, VOLUME 2 FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS, ACETYLENE CYLINDER INCIDENTS AND NATURAL GAS INCIDENTS

Following the recent publication of the above manual, it is regretted that two errors have been identified which require amendment. These are set out below:

(1) Acetylene Cylinder Incidents

Page 1, 1.0 Introduction, paragraph 3, second sentence states "It is a stable gas at ambient temperature and pressure....."

Page 1, 1.1 General Properties, paragraph 5, second sentence states "It is an unstable gas at ambient temperature and pressure....."

Both of these entries should be consistent and should read "**unstable**".

(2) Natural Gas Incidents

Page 43, Appendices. This page is headed " Acetylene Cylinder Incidents". It should state "**Natural Gas Incidents**".

Brigades are requested to ensure that all copies of the manual are amended accordingly. (An attachment in pdf format is forwarded with this DCOL and may be used to print out and replace page 43).

Contact details Keith.ring@odom.gsi.gov.uk Keith Ring Assistant Inspector of Fire Services

Telephone 020 7944 5694

Mobile 07919 044 091

Fax 020 7944 5784

e-mail keith.ring@odpm.gsi.gov.uk