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Your reference

The Chief Executive, County Councils
in England and Wales

Our reference FEP/91 74/403/1

The Clerk to the Fire and Civil Defence
Authority

Date 9 September 1993

The Chief Fire Officer



Dear Sir or Madam

FIRE SERVICE CIRCULAR 9/1993 FIRST AID TRAINING AND CASUALTY HANDLING

Introduction

1. Fire Authorities will be aware of the revised Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) which gives practical guidance on interpreting the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 (SI No 917). The revised Approved Code of Practice came into effect on 2 July 1990, and replaced the original guidance which was issued under FSC 7/82. The purpose of this circular is to give revised advice, formulated by the Joint Training Committee of the CFBAC, on the extent and nature of first aid training to comply with the ACOP and for other purposes.

2. The new guidance is explained in the Appendix to this circular. Recommended syllabuses for first aid training are contained in the Annexes to the Appendix.

Background

3. The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 place a general duty on employers to make, or to ensure that there is made, adequate first aid provision for their employees if they are injured or become ill at work. In addition to all fire service premises, the fire/incident ground falls within the definition of workplace under these regulations and adequate first aid provision must therefore be available at such places. The previous guidance given to brigades in Fire Service Circulars 7/82 and 18/83 does not reflect the guidance given in the current First Aid at Work ACOP.

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4. These requirements apart, most fire brigades have for a long time accepted that there is also an operational need for personnel with a wider range of skills in first aid and casualty handling to enable them to deal with injuries suffered by members of the public at incidents which the fire service have attended.

5. At the CFBAC Joint Training Committee held on 21 February 1991, members agreed that a sub-committee be set up to review the current guidance offered to brigades on training in First Aid and Casualty Handling. The sub-committee would need to take into account the revised ACOP, together with the operational requirements for firefighters to carry out first aid work and casualty handling.

6. Neither the regulations nor the ACOP prescribe how many trained first aiders should be provided or the manner in which provision should be made. It is for the employer to ensure that the arrangements which he makes will satisfy the Health and Safety Executive that the regulations are being complied with and that any special needs of the brigade are being met. The recommendations of the Joint Training Committee, on which HSE is represented, can be assumed to meet the needs of most brigades, but it remains open to the fire authority or the Chief Officer to make other arrangements to comply with the regulations if they so determine.

Earlier Guidance

7. This guidance supersedes Fire Service Circulars 7/82 and 18/83 which should be deleted.

Cost Implications

8. The unavoidable cost implications of the guidance appended to this circular arise from the 1981 regulations and the revised approved Code of Practice. The extent to which additional costs will be incurred by brigades is not quantifiable and depends on the extent to which first aid training is already provided.

Reference Points

9. Enquiries arising from this circular should be addressed to Mrs P Culley (071-217 8748) or Miss D Symonds (071-217 8753). Enquiries arising from the Appendix to the circular or its annexes should be addressed to HM Inspector Mr A Wells (071-217 8072) or Assistant Inspector Mr J Higgins (071-217 8721).

Yours faithfully

M. J. Addison

M J ADDISON
Head of Fire Services Division

**First Aid Training for the Fire Service
Recommendations of the Joint Training Committee of the CFBAC**

Duty of Employer to make Provision for First Aid

1. Regulation 3 of the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 states that an employer shall provide, or ensure that there are provided, such equipment and facilities as are adequate and appropriate in the circumstances for enabling first aid to be rendered to employees if they are injured or become ill at work. Fire authorities also have a duty to take reasonable care for the health and safety of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. One task which a firefighter may undertake at work is to render first aid to brigade employees or members of the public. The firefighter has an obligation to take reasonable care when carrying out this task and should be trained appropriately.

2. The following guidance was prepared by a sub-committee of the Joint Training Committee of the CFBAC.

3. In this guidance the term "trained first aider" means a person who has completed a first aid at work training course approved by HSE and holds a valid certificate. The term "emergency first aider" means a person who has completed the training described in paragraph 13.

PROVISION OF TRAINED FIRST AIDERS

4. The Sub-Committee when considering the proportion of firefighters in a brigade who should hold current first aid certificates (to enable them to undertake the "trained first aider" requirements), considered the practical guidance contained in the ACOP. They also considered rescue and other work that may be carried out by brigades and have made the following recommendations.

- (a) 25% of all firefighters, both wholetime and retained, should be qualified to "Trained First Aider" standard as soon as possible, and re-qualify after three years.
- (b) All remaining firefighters should be trained to "Emergency First Aider" standard as soon as possible, and attend a refresher course every three years.
- (c) All wholetime and retained recruits should, as part of their basic training, qualify as "Trained First Aiders" and re-qualify after three years.

- (d) Once (a) above is achieved there should be at least one Trained First Aider included in the crew of every operational pumping appliance.
- (e) Where there is a known manufacturer or user of cyanides, related compounds or hydrofluoric acid in the area to which a fire station is first in attendance or in an area served by adjacent fire stations, all trained first aiders and emergency personnel should be warned of the hazards. Where necessary, personnel with additional training in the specific hazards should be sent to the incident as soon as possible.
- (f) Where oxygen equipment is used as an adjunct to resuscitation it should be administered by a person qualified in its use who holds a valid certificate. See also paragraph 17(c).
- (g) In Fire Brigade Training Schools or other specialised training areas, all instructors should be qualified "Trained First Aiders".
- (h) It should be the long term aim for all firefighters to become "Trained First Aiders" and remain qualified throughout their career.

Training for Retained Firefighters

5. The JTC recognised that some brigades may experience practical difficulties in carrying out first aid training for existing retained personnel. They agreed, however, that brigades should develop a training programme that will enable them to comply with the First Aid at Work Regulations and ACOP in the shortest possible time.

Volunteer Firefighters

6. Provision for first aid for volunteer firefighters will also have to be made under the First Aid Regulations 1981 and ACOP. The appropriate level of provision will depend on the tasks which the fire authority plans for its volunteers to undertake. Where the role of volunteers is restricted, for example, to contain fires from a distance, and they are not directed to enter fires, then there should be at least one emergency first aider available to render first aid. If volunteers are required to carry out additional duties, including the wearing of BA, then to cater for the additional risks there should be an appropriate increased provision of first aid at such incidents. This provision should include a trained first aider.

7. The arrangements made for the attendance of emergency or trained first aiders is a matter for the Chief Fire Officer taking account of local needs and organisation.

Examinations

8. Brigades should plan examinations so that they can be supervised in a manner consistent with the ACOP. This states that "First Aid examinations should be conducted by at least two examiners who are qualified trainers, one of whom should be a nurse or medical practitioner with a knowledge and experience of first aid in the workplace".

Trained First Aider - Courses

9. Training courses for trained first aiders (Annex A) including examinations, should be of at least four full days duration (six contact hours per day) or the equivalent, allowing the course to run over a longer period. Each session should be of not less than two hours duration and the whole course (including examination) must be completed within 13 weeks from the date of commencement.

Trained First Aider - Refresher Courses

10. Certificates of Qualification in first aid will be valid for such a period time as HSE directs (at present for three years). A refresher course followed by examination will be required before re-certification.

11. Refresher courses (Annex B) should be of at least two days (six contact hours each day) duration including time set aside for examination. Each session should be of not less than two hours duration and the whole course (including examination) must be completed within six weeks from the date of commencement.

12. Courses should include revision on all subjects included in the basic syllabus together with theoretical and practical training in any new first aid methods and procedures. When a certificate has lapsed it will be necessary for the person to complete a full first aid course to re-qualify.

Emergency First Aider

13. In this guidance the term "Emergency first aider" means a person who has completed a training course (Annex C) of six hours duration or the equivalent, allowing the course to run over a longer period if necessary. The whole course must be completed within four weeks of commencement. This training must be repeated as a minimum every three years.

Approval of First Aid Training and Qualifications

14. Whilst agreement with the Health and Safety Executive has been reached on standard teaching programmes for fire brigades, for the purpose of the First Aid Regulations, it will still be necessary for each brigade to seek approval from their HSE local office before commencing training.

General First Aid Certificate Qualification

15. Those firefighters who hold a valid first aid certificate issued by an organisation whose training and qualifications are not approved by HSE under the current regulations and ACOP, will need additional training in first aid at work and examination before re-certification as a Trained First Aider.

16. Arrangements have been agreed with HSE for a conversion course (Annex D) followed by an examination which tests the competencies in all aspects of first aid at work. This conversion course may be of shorter duration than the initial "First Aid at Work" course, but should not be less than two days or equivalent and the whole course (including examination) must be completed within six weeks of commencement. The conversion course and examination will be subject to HSE monitoring in the usual way. All conversion courses will be completed within two years of the issue of this circular.

Special Hazards

17. "Trained First Aiders" will need to undergo specific training and examination and hold a valid certificate (in addition to general first aid training) in cases where the following special hazards are to be found within the brigade area.

- (a) A danger of poisoning by certain cyanides and related compounds (Annex E).
- (b) A danger of burns from hydrofluoric acid (Annex F).
- (c) A need for oxygen as an adjunct to resuscitation (Annex G).

Where the hazard arises only from occasional or irregular transport of the substances described at (a) and (b) above through a brigade area, it is not considered appropriate to specify what provision of "Trained First Aiders is necessary against an unquantifiable hazard. In those cases where there is a significant known and regular traffic of hazardous substances in an area, brigades should determine an appropriate level of first aid cover, in the light of the circumstances.

Ambulance Availability

18. The Health and Safety First Aid Regulations permit brigades to adopt other methods to make first aid provision, such as entering into a contract with an ambulance service for the provision of first aid at operational incidents. However, brigades must ensure that the contract made meets the requirements of the regulations, and should continuously monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements.

19. Those Brigades who do not have specific contract arrangements with ambulance services should not assume that an ambulance present at an incident discharges their requirement to provide "Trained First Aiders", nor the requirements for those first aiders to be trained in the special hazards (except oxygen resuscitation).