

OPERATIONAL COMPETENCE

DESIRED OUTCOME

A fire and rescue service with competent operational and fire control personnel, who have been trained to use the hazard and control measure approach provided in the National Operational Guidance, applying risk assessment, decision-making and risk management skills.

Operational competence provides the structure for a safe and effective response to emergencies, whether:

- As a single service
- Working with other local or regional fire and rescue services
- Working with the National Resilience capabilities
- Working in a multi-agency structure

The Health and Safety Executive publication, Managing for health and safety, states:

“Competence is the ability to undertake responsibilities and perform activities to a recognised standard on a regular basis. It combines practical and thinking skills, knowledge and experience.”

The same publication also states:

“The competence of individuals is vital, whether they are employers, managers, supervisors, employees or contractors, especially those with safety-critical roles. It ensures they recognise the risks in their activities and can apply the right measures to control and manage those risks.”

BUSINESS AREAS

Service Delivery

CAPABILITIES

Response

WHAT IS REQUIRED TO MEET THE FIRE STANDARD



Date approved
15 Feb 2021

Date issued
16 Feb 2021

Review date
10 Oct 2024
(last review)

Reference number
FSD-RSP02b

To meet this Fire Standard, **a fire and rescue service must:**

1. Comply with health and safety legislation when delivering an operational response
2. Base their operational policies, procedures and tailored guidance on National Operational Guidance, unless by exception its content is not relevant to the service
3. Have policies, procedures and tailored guidance in place, that provide operational and fire control personnel with current information and instructions about foreseeable hazards and the control measures that can be applied
4. Base their training for operational and fire control personnel on National Operational Guidance
5. Train operational and fire control personnel to a level of competence that enables them to carry out operational activities safely and effectively; this includes the ability to recognise hazards and put effective control measures in place to mitigate those hazards
6. Be following the tactical actions provided in the suite of National Operational Guidance, unless by exception a tactical action is not relevant to the service
7. Be able to evidence how their policies, procedures and tailored guidance are linked to the training of operational and fire control personnel
8. Be able to evidence any exceptions to National Operational Guidance, with an appropriate impact assessment
9. Develop working arrangements with other fire and rescue services and responder agencies, to improve their operational response to multi-agency incidents

To meet this Fire Standard, **competent operational and fire control personnel should:**

10. Be able to evidence the training they have received to maintain their competence
11. Be able to demonstrate their ability to safely and effectively apply risk assessment, decision-making and risk management skills

To meet this Fire Standard, **a fire and rescue service may:**

12. Use the training specification component of National Operational Guidance to inform their training needs analysis
13. Work within regional, national or thematic groups to develop and improve their policies, procedures, tailored guidance and training for operational response

EXPECTED BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING THE FIRE STANDARD

Expected benefits of achieving the Fire Standard include:

1. The ability for those outside the service, including coroners or those responsible for matters such as public inquiries, to recognise that the service is delivering a competent operational response
2. For inspectorates, including His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the Health and Safety Executive, to be able to base their expectations of the operational competence of the service on:
 1. Adherence to the legislative requirements for operational response
 2. How comprehensively the National Operational Guidance has been considered and applied
3. Having competent operational and fire control personnel, who are able to apply risk assessment, decision-making and risk management skills
4. Constant improvement to the quality of service provided to the public

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS OR MANDATORY DUTIES

Fire and rescue services are responsible, under legislation and regulations, for developing policies and procedures and to provide information, instruction, training and supervision to their personnel about foreseeable hazards and the control measures used to reduce the risks arising from those hazards.

There are many references to relevant legislation and regulations made throughout the National Operational Guidance framework. Some of the fundamental ones are shown below.

Fire and Rescue Services Act

This act is the principal legislation for the fire and rescue services of England and Wales. It describes the duties and powers placed on the fire and rescue service, in particular:

- To provide an operational response (sections 7, 8 and 9)
- The power to respond to other types of emergency (sections 11 and 12)

Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act

This act imposes a duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- The health, safety and welfare at work of all of their employees (section 2)
- The health and safety of others is not affected by the work carried out by their employees (section 3)

The act also means that employees have a duty to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and of other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work (section 7).

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations

Regulation 3 states that employers have to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work, and the risks to the health and safety of people not in their employment arising from work carried out.

Regulation 4 states that where an employer implements any preventive and protective measures the following principles (in Schedule 1) apply:

- Avoiding risks
- Evaluating the risks which cannot be avoided
- Combating the risks at source
- Adapting the work to the individual, especially as regards the design of workplaces, the choice of work equipment and the choice of working and production methods, with a view, in particular, to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined work-rate and to reducing their effect on health
- Adapting to technical progress
- Replacing the dangerous by the non-dangerous or the less dangerous
- Developing a coherent overall prevention policy which covers technology, organisation of work, working conditions, social relationships and the influence of factors relating to the working environment

- Giving collective protective measures priority over individual protective measures
- Giving appropriate instructions to employees

Regulation 5 states that every employer has to make and record appropriate arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of preventive and protective measures.

LINKED QUALIFICATIONS, ACCREDITATIONS OR FIRE STANDARDS

Fire Standards

- Code of Ethics
- Operational preparedness
- Operational learning

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

National Operational Guidance (NOG), in particular:

- The tactical actions for each control measure throughout the suite of guidance
- Supplementary information, in particular where procedural training is provided

The Operational Response implementation guide