Central London Forward statements

Heritage buildings

We take our responsibilities for heritage buildings seriously. With the exception of Crown properties, where fire safety is the responsibility of the government, heritage buildings are subject to regular fire safety inspections and familiarisation visits by fire crews who will develop appropriate tactical or contingency plans.

We recognise that because of their construction and layout, fires in these buildings can spread more quickly and that they frequently require significant damage control work. In 2011/12 we matched 49 fires to locations listed as Grade 1 or Grade 2* by English Heritage. (This is less than one per cent of all building fires). We have found that the nature of the fire and the fire risk is more related to the occupier's use of the building and how well the fire safety arrangements are managed by them; for example, a listed building used as a hotel rather than the building's heritage features

We looked specifically at heritage buildings as part of our incident response arrangements. Our modelling takes account of calls to heritage buildings and the proposals in the London Safety Plan maintain our first and second appliance attendance times to them within the London- wide standards.

Because of the often resource intensive nature of firefighting operations at heritage buildings we have also assessed our ability to provide additional resources in an effective timescale should they be required and are satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place.

We continue to work with English Heritage and other relevant parties to ensure that not only are heritage buildings appropriately protected but that we also continue to have robust and effective joint plans in place for us to deal with fires quickly and effectively and protect their often invaluable contents if a fire does occur.

Demography and future growth

As part of the preparation for the fifth London Safety, the Brigade looked at various aspects of risk in London. That work included an examination of London's demography.

The 2011 Census recorded the resident population of London at nearly 8.2 million people. This represents a growth of around one million people in the 10-year period since the 2001 Census. The population in 1965 was around eight million and contracted over the next four decades when in 1991 the census recorded just 6.4 million people. Since then the population has increased and is projected to increase to over 10 million by 2031.

We know that many public bodies plan their resources and provision of services with a direct relationship to population change. However, fires and other emergency incidents don't behave in that way. When we compare fire and incident data with population change we have found no direct correlation. There will be a relationship between the number of people and buildings in London and emergency incidents, but at the moment our prevention and protection work has a greater impact on the reduction of these incidents than the rise in population has given to any increase.

Whilst, there may not be a direct link between incidents and resident population, there is a known link between fire and deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 showed that over 26 per cent of London falls within the most deprived 20 per cent of England. Deprivation also severely affects the elderly in London and the elderly are one of the groups most vulnerable to the risk of fire, particularly when other social factor are present. IMD 2010 showed that over a third of London is

amongst the top 20 per cent for income deprivation among older people across England. The IMD, with other data, helps us target prevention work.

We have carried out some exploratory work looking at incident projections to 2030; this work has included examining the impact of the estimated increase in London's population up to 2030. The work recognises that the Brigade's performance management arrangements will work to prevent any large increases in service levels like those we have seen before. For example, the increase in shut in lift releases and attending lock ins and lock outs. It is also reasonable to assume that our prevention work will continue to have a positive effect on the reduction of incidents for a further decade. Even allowing for an increase in incidents in line with population growth, the number of incidents in 2030 are projected to be lower than in 2010.

Critical Emergency Preparedness

Over the last three years the London Fire Brigade's current fleet of 169 fire engines attended an average of around 337 incidents a day. Last year, our fire engines spent an average of 7.4 per cent of their time at emergency incidents. In planning our resources, we consider on a daily basis the number of fire engines that are available to deal with emergencies and the number that can be released for operational training or community fire safety work.

We are always mindful of the wider operational risks facing London as the UK's capital city. We have a statutory duty to make sure we have appropriate arrangements to respond to major emergencies defined by the Civil Contingencies Act. The government's National Risk Register includes an Influenza pandemic, a terrorist attack, a volcanic ash cloud and major flooding. We know that these risks could place higher than normal levels of demand on the Brigade and our assessment of their nature and potential impact informs the way we develop our capabilities, resources and plans to deal with them as well as maintaining our day-to-day core service provision.

Computer-based modelling helps inform us where we should locate our appliances and stations to provide the best service. It enables us to understand the levels of demand the service is subjected to during significant simultaneous incidents, large-scale emergencies and other incidents that could potentially need our attendance for long periods of time. As a result, we have been able to determine the most suitable locations for our resources and have been able to not only account for the day to day demands of the service, but also the significant events I have already mentioned.

For example, at the height of the 2005 London bombings, 98 fire engines were still available to respond to other incidents. At the busiest time during the 2011 civil disturbances 97 fire engines were committed but 65 were still available at fire stations. On the afternoon of the Olympics closing ceremony last August, there was a large fire in Dagenham. At one point, 63 fire engines were committed to that and other incidents, but 100 were available at stations, including two at the Olympic Park.

Our ongoing approach to preparedness and resilience planning is also collaborative. The London Local Resilience Forum establishes cooperation and collaboration between the emergency services, local authorities, voluntary organisations, utility companies and the business sector. We believe this has served London well in terms of joint organised response to major events and incidents.

Tall buildings

We estimate that there are around 40,000 high rise buildings across London and that half of these are within the six boroughs represented here today. We don't know the exact number as there is no formal

definition of what a high rise building is and no requirement for developers or Local Authorities to record or 'register' these buildings any differently to any other.

We define a high rise as any building with an occupied floor high at or greater than 18 metres – which is around 7 stories – as at this height buildings are required to have additional fire fighting facilities built into the design of the building (for example a dry riser water main) and we adapt our fire fighting tactics to make use of these.

British Standards for Building Control ensure that high rise buildings are constructed, and altered, with fire safety in mind and there is significantly more fire resistance in the construction of high rise building than is found in a typical suburban house.

As you will know, our Regulatory Fire Safety Officers have good working relationships with your Building Control Officers and we are able to positively influence the design, construction and alterations to high rise buildings to ensure that fire safety is an integral part of the building.

Fire Safety Legislation places a duty on those responsible for buildings used as workplaces, or those responsible for the common parts of domestic and other properties, to conduct a fire risk assessment and ensure that fire risks are adequately understood and mitigated for and that any fire protection or fire fighting facilities provided in the building are properly maintained.

Our vehicle fleet currently has 11 aerial (high reach) appliances. These have a typical maximum working height of around 30 metres – which is sufficient reach for around 96 per cent of all the buildings in London. Beyond 30 metres the capabilities of any fire appliance are greatly reduced. [*Currently the greatest reach of any commercially available fire appliance in the world is around 100 metres and all of London's 10 tallest buildings are taller than this.]*

Knowing we could never mount an external fire fighting attack to fires in these very tall buildings means that we prepare tactics so that we can fire fight from within the building itself. Our firefighters are trained for this and the building design gives protection to our firefighters and increased protection to the building occupiers who may have to stay within the building while the fire is brought under control.

High rise living doesn't increase the likelihood of a fire starting or of becoming a fire casualty. The 2011 Census records around 38 per cent of Londoners as living in a 'Purpose-built block of flats or tenement'. The proportion of fires that we record as being in a purpose-built block of flats is slightly greater than this [*46 per cent*] but this can be attributed to the lifestyle behaviours of the residents – their risks relate to their living conditions and their behaviours, not to the type of property. We have taken these lifestyle risks into account in our modelling work and sensitivity analysis.