

Ops Assurance Highlight Report



Name & Role	Operational Assurance and Assessment GM David Reid, SM Terry Maher
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Period covered:

Date from:	01/01/2021	Date to:	31/03/2021
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Highlights/Achievements this period

1. Station Audits – *Make best use of our resources (benchmark our performance)*

- The station audit programme started on Monday 26th April 2021. The process will review and report on Fire Service Standards Operational Preparedness and Competence
- The station audit process will include Phase 3 of the Covid-19 workplace compliance thematic review (see section 5).

Policy documents

Following a review of current policies and analysis of operational learning three new Service wide policy documents have been developed by the Operational Assurance department:

- Operational Debrief policy
- Monitoring Officer policy
- Peer Support policy

Progress:

The Operational Debrief policy has been reviewed and aligned to National Operational Guidance. This closes an outstanding HMICFRS area for improvement.

Actions:

Implement Monitoring Officer and Peer Support policy in Q2 – Both Policies being aligned with National Operational Guidance and provides incident monitoring and support at all operational levels.

2. Failure to Respond (FTR's) – *Make best use of our resources (benchmark our performance)*

- This quarter there was 6 FTR's similar to the previous quarter.
- 3 FTR's were in the North East (NE), 2 in the South East (SE) and 1 in the South West (SW) and 0 in the North West.

NE Failures

1 x Appliance incorrectly placed back on-the-run – 11 Dovercourt - Following the rectification of a defect by Service Work Shops.

2 x Alerter Failures – 12 Clacton

SE Failures

2x Alerter Failures – 42 Shoeburyness

SW Failures

1x shortage of riders – 69 Billericay

Progress:

The Operational Assurance department examine the details of each FTR and provide feedback to Station Manager's. In Q1 the Operational Assurance department identified an increase in Alerter failures as a result the Operational Assurance department and ICT colleagues are working closely to establish the cause. The Operational Assurance department have developed a new standardised form for Failure to Respond notifications in collaboration with Service Control and Station Manager's. The new FTR notification procedure requires the Station Manager to conduct an initial investigation and document their actions. The form is then returned to the Operational Assurance department within 7 days for monitoring and reporting purpose.

Actions:

1. Continue investigating the increase in Service Alerter failures through the 4i mobilising team and ICT. The increase in Alerter failures has been identified as a fault within the 4i mobilising system. The 4i team are to carry out further testing with Remsdaq. Expected completion April 2021.
3. Continue monitoring the time taken to mobilise an alternative resource to the incident. The Operational Assurance department will continue to report each quarter.
4. Implement new notification form through Service Control to expediate initial investigation process of Station Manager. Complete.

	2020/21
	Total FTR's across all groups per quarter
2019/20	
Quarter 4	6
2020/21	
Quarter 1	4
Quarter 2	11
Quarter 3	6
Quarter 4	6

3. Monitoring Officer (MO) reports – *Make best use of our resources (ensure there is an effective risk management process in place)*

In total, there were 55 MO mobilisations this quarter, with 26 incidents attended and 20 operational learning reports completed by Flexi Officers.

Mobilisations that did not produce a report	No
Stop sent before/on arrival	26
MO attended - nothing to report	2

Stop sent before/on arrival – breakdown by incident type	No
Fire – Persons Reported	11
Rescue from Water	7
RTC – Persons Trapped	4
Rescue from Height	2
Rescue from Mud	1
Chemical suicide	1

	Current quarter	Previous quarter
MO mobilisations	55	67
Reports not required (please refer to table below for trends identified)	28	28
Reports expected	27	39
Reports received	20	31

Areas of Operational learning identified:

- Following attendance at fatal incidents, the need for contemporaneous notes to be taken by operational personnel.
- A 50% increase in persons reported fires this quarter.
- When ECFRS attend cross border incidents or working with other FRS's, the use and review of an Analytical Risk Assessments (ARA's) improved situational awareness. Some bordering FRS's do not complete an ARA as part of their safe systems of work – Last year 2020 ECFRS Operational Assurance department created a cross border debrief form which is available to operational crews via the Mobile Data Terminal and appliance Tablets. This has generated incident risk assessment feedback. The

feedback has improved operational learning related to situational awareness when an Analytical Risk Assessment is completed at a cross border incident. The cross border debrief process adopted by ECFRS has enabled additional incident data to be captured by the Operational Assurance department. ECFRS Operational Assurance department identified an incident risk assessment gap following improvements to the cross border debrief process. The ECFRS Operational Assurance department shared this learning with regional Fire Rescue Services via the Regional Operational Assurance Group meeting. The Analytical Risk Assessment completion process is a standing agenda item at the Regional Operational Assurance Group meeting. Each FRS in the region has an action to report on their incident risk assessment procedure at the next meeting.

- Sharing understanding of neighbouring FRS's incident risk assessment procedures can be improved – Example the London Fire Brigade adopt a dynamic risk assessment process to declare a Tactical Mode for each incident. The Incident Commander must declare a Tactical Mode either Offensive (Oscar) or Defensive (Delta) within twenty minutes of arrival at the incident address. An example is a fire involving an acetylene cylinder. If the Incident Commander has credible information the acetylene cylinder is involved in the fire Tactical Mode Delta is declared. No operational firefighter is deployed in the hazard zone (maximum 200 metres). However minimal crews may be deployed to secure a branch or deploy a ground monitor if substantial cover exists. The hazard zone may be reduced as the risk reduces or if substantial cover offers protection for operational personnel should the acetylene cylinder explode. If the Incident Commander receives credible information the acetylene cylinder is not involved in a fire then Tactical Mode Oscar is declared and operational personnel can be deployed to extinguish the fire with no additional control measures.

Actions:

- Guidance to be released by Operational Policy department regarding the use of cotemporaneous notes. Expected completion July 2021.
- Community Risk department to target highest risk groups for domestic fires. A three month pilot scheme run by the Community Risk team is due to begin May 2021. The scheme will be used in the wards of Clacton to identify those most at risk for accidental dwelling fires.
- Establish agreed joint working protocols for risk assessments at incidents when working with other FRS's. Agreement has been reached within the regional FRS group. Complete. Work is currently under review with the London Fire Brigade (LFB). Expected completion July 2021.
- Community Fire Risk Management System (CFRMIS) is still in its implementation phase – long-term aim to incorporate all risks from all stakeholders immediately upon mobilisation to an address. Expected completion July 2021.

4. Debriefs – *Make best use of our resources (benchmark our performance)*

Overview:

The debrief process continue to show improvements with the frequency and quality of submissions, reviews and completed actions. The Operational Assurance department continue to conduct Tactical and Strategic debriefing via Microsoft Teams and have included both internal and external partners in the process to improve both operational and organisational learning. This new debrief format due to new COVID-19 working practice requirements has transformed the way the Operational Assurance department operates and made the debrief process more effective and efficient (see below for data and graphs).

Strategic Debriefs:

Since last quarters report, there have been no strategic debriefs carried out. The Tilbury Grain Incident report will be available by May 2021. Initial findings have been shared with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to support ongoing learning. Following the release of the Tilbury Grain report an ECFRS action plan will be generated and overseen by the Operational Assurance department.

Tilbury Grain Terminal

Initial areas of good practice highlighted:

- Level of trust and cooperative working between ECFRS and partner agencies throughout incident.
- Use of London Fire Brigade thermal imaging drones in early stages.
- Early arrangements for Critical Incident Team (CIT) to be set up.

- Petrochemical team advice and expertise.
- Actions of officers and crews following escalation of fire in basement area.

Initial organisational learning identified:

- Confusion in initial ECFRS Command Structure in place.
- A need to establish a Service wide tactical plan template.
- Development of initial level 2 officer.
- Review the requirements of Service drone. Limitations of sub-400-degree readings when assessing building (Silo) integrity.
- Lack of consistency of Incident Commander on site at protracted incidents. Lead to frequent updating of situational awareness, raised by external partners.
- Full understanding of scale and size of incident by initial Officers'.
- Recording of information at large scale protracted incidents. This led to 2 separate decision logs in initial stages.
- Develop Officer understanding of CIT and Tactical Coordination Group (TCG).
- Handover of information between Officers', leading to lack of full situation awareness at differing times throughout the incident.

Actions:

The following actions have been recorded under a Service wide action plan. An expected completion date of 31/07/2021 has been given to all relevant departments. The Operational Assurance department will continue to monitor and provide regular updates.

- Command Structure framework at protracted incidents to be established and entered onto incidents logs. **Emergency Planning / Service Control.**
- Further development of initial attending flexi officer. **Learning and Development.**
- Review needs for additional service drone offering higher thermal reading capability. **Operations.**
- Review of policy for Major / protracted incidents and consistency of command. **Emergency Planning / Operational Policy.**
- Develop training packages for officers based on major incidents the service has attended. **Learning and Development.**
- Decision log recording systems to be reviewed. This is currently under review as part of the Incident Command Unit project.
- Critical Incident Team / Tactical Coordination Group training has been implemented by Emergency planning. Complete.
- IIMARCH understanding to be continued through Learning and Development training courses. Complete.

Tactical Debrief reports:

Of the 15 Tactical Debrief reports from this quarter we can see the following:

- 11 of the incidents remained at a 4-pump level with the addition of either an Aerial Ladder Platform or Water Bowser.
- In addition, there was one 5-pump incident, Two 6-pump incidents and one 12- pump incident.
- 5 of the incidents were in outdoor structures or agricultural buildings.
- 5 of the incidents were within domestic premises including one thatched roof property.
- 3 were within commercial/industrial premises.
- 1 RTC multi lane carriageway incident.
- 1 derelict building incident.
- These incidents included three fatalities, with two further fatality notifications from Service Control during this quarter.

Organisational learning and trends identified through these debrief processes include:

Service Control:

- Continued issues with 4i mobilising system crashing due to larger incident types. This led to inaccurate information on mobilising sheets, and some relief appliances believing they were forming part of an

incident make-up as opposed to relief crews. This resulted in proceeding on blue lights as opposed to normal road speeds.

- Minimum crewing level of Service Control operators during larger incidents causing welfare and role issues.
- Notification process through Service Control lacked consistency.
- Training development of Service Control operators.

Operations:

- Effectiveness of Incident Command Unit (ICU) functionality.
- Ability to communicate at cross border incidents with neighbouring FRS's.
- Lack of pre-incident intelligence for operational crews.
- Limitations of equipment carried on appliances to gain entry to premises.
- Identifying breathing apparatus qualified crews on the incident ground.
- Hydrant and risk information when working at cross border incidents.

Actions – Control:

- Procurement of new ECFRS mobilising system. Expected completion September 2022.
- In conjunction with Station Manager Service Control Training a review of minimum personnel on each Service Control Watch has been started. Expected completion July 2021.
- A New notification process for Service Control operators utilising Microsoft SharePoint. Complete.
- Service exercise program to develop training for Service Control operators. Operations / Operational Risk. Expected completion June 2021.

Actions – Operations:

- ICU working group set up to look at functionality and effectiveness of current ICU arrangements. This is currently under review by Assistant Director Service Delivery.
- Review of current Analytical Risk Assessments (ARA) process and a move to an electronic version being investigated. Expected completion July 2021.
- A review of cross border communications initiated by the Operational Assurance department in conjunction with all neighbouring Fire and Rescue Service's. Complete.
- All appliances to be issued with new method of entry kits by technical services department. Expected completion July 2021.
- Updated risk and hydrant information uploaded onto resilience direct between Essex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Suffolk FRS. Complete.
- Current review to add London Fire Brigade (LFB). Expected completion July 2021.

Operational hot debriefs:

31 Operational Hot debrief forms were returned this quarter. This form has been developed and introduced by the Operational Assurance department and is available to capture all Operational learning and information immediately following an incident. The form is available via appliance tablets, Flexi Officer tablets, the Intranet and through the homepage on the IRS system.

Areas highlighted through the form:

- Review of gate pack information held at sites requiring a Tactical Fire Plan (TFP).
- Review information at incidents where crews assist other agencies. This followed crews disturbing an armed occupant.
- Review crews understanding of the Operational Discretion policy.

Actions:

- Collaboration between the Operational Assurance department, Operations, and Operational Risk Managers to review all information held on current Site-Specific Risk Assessments (SSRI's) and Tactical Fire Plans (TFP's). A new process has been developed through a risk SharePoint site. Complete.
- Comms to be released highlighting actions required when implementing operational discretion at incidents. Expected completion May 2021.
- Learning & Development to include Operational Discretion Policy during Officer training courses. Complete.

Further to these actions the Operational Assurance department release the Operational Learning bulletins each quarter to all operational crews to develop continued learning.

An increase in the quantity of debrief returns and the timely way they are received aid the debrief process in support of future learning and improvements.

Debrief Type	No
Operational/Hot	31
Tactical - Exercise	0
Tactical - Incident	15
Strategic – Incident	0
JESIP	0
Cross Border	2

Command	Tactical Incident	FB272 Return Rate
NE	3	70%
NW	3	61%
SE	1	53%
SW	8	67%
OTB	2	66%

5. Thematic Reviews - *Make best use of our resources (ensure there is an effective risk management process in place)*

Station review of COVID compliance:

Following the completion of Site Specific Covid-19 workplace assessments, the Operational Assurance department were tasked with organising a review of procedures across our operational sites.

The thematic review is split into 3 phases:

1. Phase I – Wholetime, Day Crewing Conversion, USAR. (22nd Feb – 26th Feb)
2. Phase II – On-Call, Service Control. (1st March - 31st March) This will be a dip sample of sites across all four Commands.
3. Phase III – the remainder of On-Call locations will receive a COVID-19 assessment as part of the station audit process commencing in April 2021.

The following initial findings/trends were identified across the Service following phase I & II:

- Multi-Pump Stations are finding greater challenges than establishments with smaller numbers of personnel whilst pinch points have been found in older buildings.
- Signage was clear and evident – stating direction of movement – permitted numbers per room – detailed guidance for hands/face/space. Stations should assess whether their one-way system creates unnecessary movement through additional areas.
- Good change of watch procedures in evidence – Separate areas allocated for watches whilst briefings undertaken by officers before relaying info to crews.
- Good knowledge of current information available (Risk Assessments/Safety Flashes, etc) – Crews reminded to check for updates online rather than share hard copies on station.
- Gym areas are being used on a rota basis (restricted to on-duty personnel at wholetime stations) with evidence of cleaning and ventilation between each use. Activities such as circuit training have ceased to avoid the sharing of equipment.
- External areas adjacent to mess areas utilised to offer a safer/larger area to use.
- Watch training sessions have been divided into smaller groups to safely accommodate.
- On-Call training nights split over two evenings to maintain social distancing measures.

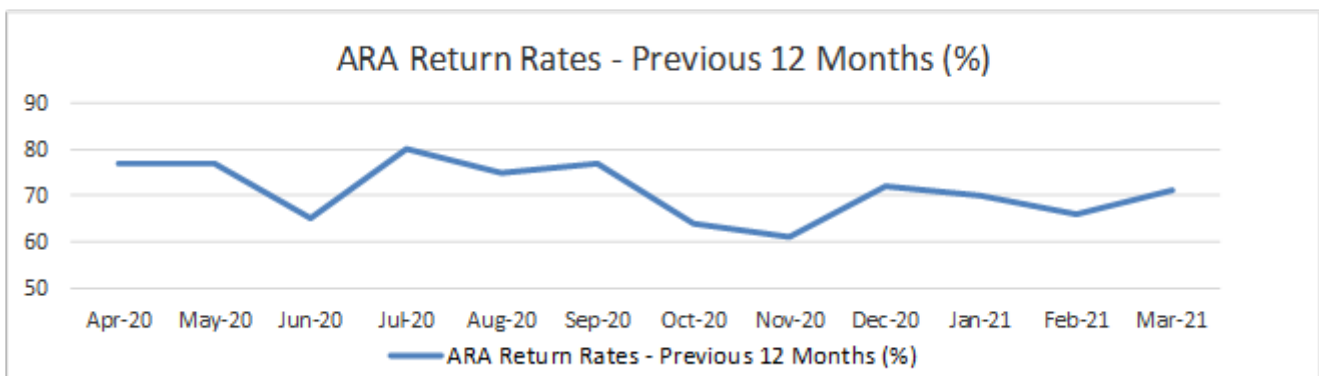
6. Analytical Risk Assessments (ARA's) – Make best use of our resources (ensure there is an effective risk management process in place)

Overview:

This quarter has seen a slight increase in return rates from the previous quarter. An ongoing review to move to electronic versions of ARA's is being carried out by the Operational Assurance team. Collaborative talks between ECFRS and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service who are also looking to introduce electronic versions are progressing well.

Actions:

- Continue collating ARA returns audit trail data and identify the content for operational trends and compliance (see below for data and graphs). This is an ongoing action each quarter for the Operational Assurance department.
- Create an electronic method of ARA recording and submission through the appliance tablets. Expected completion July 2021.



Previous Quarter		Current Quarter	
October 2020	64%	January 2021	70%
November 2020	61%	February 2021	66%
December 2020	72%	March 2021	71%

7. JESIP – Collaborate with our partners (continue the good practice on the implementation and application of Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles)

Overview:

The Operational Assurance department are currently working with the Collaboration team, Essex Police and East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) to produce an operational debrief document to assist crews in recording operational and organisational learning at all multi-agency incidents.

A multi-agency contact app has been placed on all fire appliance tablets to enable crews to obtain a contact name and email address for other emergency Service representatives to enable direct sharing of information between service. This is for operational learning and details are deleted once learning has been received.

Exercises:

USAR carried out the 4-day training exercise “Tower Descent 21” with the Army’s 1 Troop 15 Field Squadron and 35 Engineer Regiment. They currently support 29 Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search Group. They can be sent to support public organisations under the Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) agreement.

They specialise in “high assurance” search, including looking for explosive devices, and can be sent anywhere in the world to secure ports and airports. The exercise worked on fall and arrest systems as well as search and rescue in confined spaces filled with water.

Key Risks (problems and opportunities predicted, not occurring)	Mitigating actions – how to prevent a problem or develop an opportunity
1. ARA compliance and completion on the incident ground not 100%.	1. A simplified process for completing an ARA at incidents is being investigated.