

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE
MOBILISING**

THE FIRE RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION SECTION

1. POLICY

It is Brigade policy to have in place arrangements to ensure the appropriate mobilisation of the Fire Research and Investigation Section.

2. STRATEGY

Detailed in this Order (Section 3) is guidance to be followed by Fire Control and Incident Commanders to ensure the appropriate mobilisation of the Fire Research and Investigation Section (FRIS). Also provided is guidance to be followed when considering the attendance of the FRIS dog team.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1 Fire Research and Investigation Section

The West Midlands Fire Service, Fire Research and Investigation Section, is based at Fire Service Headquarters, attached to the Community Protection Department under the direct control of the Director, Community Protection.

The Section works under the supervision of the Divisional Officer (Prevention) and comprises six Station Officers, on a watch related shift system giving 24 hour availability. The sixth Officer covers the frequent absence of the watch related Officers whilst on leave, training or during Court attendance. The sixth Officer is on a day duty 9-day fortnight, acting as the intelligence and co-ordinating Research Officer.

3.2 Mobilisation by Fire Control

Officers of the Section are automatically mobilised by the Duty Fire Control Officer to incidents within the following categories: -

- all fatal fires.
- all incidents from which an assistance message for four pumps or more are received. (If the assistance is for water relay or breathing apparatus, the Fire Investigation Officer will respond at their own discretion.)
- any recall incident, defined as an FDR1 reportable fire at the same address within a 12 hour period between the incident being left correct and the time of any subsequent call.
- Fire involving service properties.

3.3 Mobilisation following Incident Commander Request

The Section is mobilised upon the request of the Incident Commander to: -

- fires where there is a likelihood of a fatality occurring as a result of injuries received to a casualty, in particular serious burns cases.
- fires of a suspicious nature where the cause cannot be readily identified.
- serious, deliberate fires where a lengthy investigation may be necessary.
- a series of deliberate fires in the same premises or adjoining premises which have occurred over a relatively short period of time and may be related (this will not

normally include fires in multi-storey blocks involving rubbish chutes or bins and incidents of a similar nature).

- all fires which are a result of an unlawful act, as outlined in [Operational Procedure Note No. 8](#) Unlawful Acts - Service Procedure.
- all fires or incidents where the Incident Commander considers them of special interest as detailed in [Standing Order 15/17](#).
- fires where there may be political or public sensitivity.
- an incident where the Incident Commander is unsure of the cause and requires a second opinion.

3.4 FRIS Dog Team

The Fire Research and Investigation Section Dog Team can be requested when Incident Commanders or Fire Investigation Officers feel it is essential to the outcome of their investigation to have the scene searched for accelerants. In making such requests the following points should be considered.

- Any requests for the attendance of the Dog Team by Incident Commanders should, in the first instance, be passed to the Duty Fire Investigation Officer via Fire Control, who will determine if such a response is necessary and when.
- Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the Dog Team will only be available between 0900 hours and 1700 hours Monday to Friday. Outside these hours, any request should be referred to the Duty Principal Officer.
- The Dog Team cannot operate in the free burning or smouldering stage of a fire. A search can only be carried out when the fire is extinguished and all non-essential personnel have withdrawn.
- The Dog can detect minute traces of accelerant substances and, therefore, cannot be expected to be of any assistance at incidents in naturally contaminated premises, e.g. garage, workshop, etc.

The olfactory system (sense of smell) of the Dog is considerably more sensitive than that of a human, Incident Commanders should also consider the effect of exposure to hazardous substances and similar toxic substances that may have been involved.

3.5 Civil Disturbances

The Fire Control Duty Officer must inform the Fire Research and Investigation Section of incidents detailed in [Operational Procedure Note No. 9](#) Civil Disturbances. FRIS will not normally attend the incident whilst it is in progress except on the specific instructions of a Principal or Senior Officer or request of the Incident Commander. Except when specifically instructed to the contrary, the officer will undertake a detailed site investigation only when advised that it is prudent to do so and in co-operation with the Police and/or the Forensic Science Service.

3.6 Officer Availability

There will be occasions, when the Fire Research and Investigation Officer is committed and attendance is required at another fire. Fire Control must contact the Fire Research and Investigation Officer to determine availability to attend another incident, if this is not possible, Fire Control will pass the call to an Officer nominated for second calls.

4. CROSS REFERENCE

[Standing Order 15/17](#)

[Standing Order 15/20](#)

[Operational Procedure Note No. 8](#)

[Operational Procedure Note No. 9](#)

Fires and Incidents of Special Interest

Fire Investigation

Unlawful Acts

Civil Disturbances