

Circular number	9/2009	Date issued	26 February 2009
This circular is	For information	No response required	
This circular is	Relevant to the National Framework		
Status	This circular announces the publication of the research report 'Review of Fire and Rescue Service response times' on the CLG website.		

Publication of Research Report on Response Times

Issued by:

Rafal Pisula

Research and Statistics Division

Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
The Chief Fire Officer**

Please forward to:

Officers responsible for transport policy

Summary

This circular is to advise Fire and Rescue Authorities of the availability of the research report entitled 'Review of Fire and Rescue Service response times' on the CLG website.

For further information, contact:

**Rafal Pisula
Fire Experimental Unit
Research and Statistics Division
Fire and Resilience Directorate
c/o Fire Service College
Moreton-in-Marsh
Gloucestershire
GL56 0RH**

Direct line **01608 650004**
Fax **01608 651281**
E-mail [**rafal.pisula@communities.qsi.gov.uk**](mailto:rafal.pisula@communities.qsi.gov.uk)

Website [**www.communities.gov.uk**](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Parliamentary Select Committee's *Communities and Local Government: Departmental Annual Report 2007* noted that the time taken by Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) to respond to emergency calls has risen. The committee noted that CLG had planned research into response times and asked that means of achieving quicker responses be considered as well. CLG commissioned Greenstreet Berman Ltd to research FRS response times.
- 1.2 The response times to Primary Fires¹ were examined for the period 1996 to 2006 for all English FRSs. Response times to Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) were also analysed, using data from ten FRSs. However, the RTC data was less extensive than the primary fire dataset and therefore presented less clear results.

2.0 Research Findings

- 2.1 The research report entitled 'Review of Fire and Rescue Service response times', which provides an analysis of FRS response times across England, has been published on the CLG website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/frsresponsetimes>. The report explores: factors that may have contributed to the trends in response times over the study period; the link between changes in response times and fatality rates and property loss, and discusses possible ways in which to manage or influence some factors that may adversely affect response times.
- 2.2 Amongst the findings of the report are that:
- Response times to each category of Primary Fire¹ for England increased after 1998. For example, average response times to dwelling fires increased from 5.5 minutes in 1996 to 6.5 minutes in 2006 (18% increase). Similar trends in Primary Fire response times were apparent for all types of FRSs, such as metropolitan and non-metropolitan FRSs.
 - Response times to RTCs were analysed, using data for ten FRSs. This presented less clear results: in some FRSs the response times increased, while others showed no change.
 - By using known relationships between FRS response times and fatality rates it is predicted that the increased response times may contribute to about 13 additional fatalities in dwelling and Other Buildings² fires each year, and about 65 additional deaths at RTCs (comparing 1996-98 with 2006, all other factors being equal).
 - It is estimated that the increased response times would cause an additional annual loss of about £85m in respect of Other Buildings fire damage.

¹ Primary Fires are reportable fires (all fires in buildings, caravans, trailers, vehicles and other methods of transport, outdoor storage plant and machinery, agricultural and forestry premises and property and other outdoor structures) or any fires involving casualties, rescues, or fires attended by five or more appliances.

² Other Buildings refer to all buildings other than dwellings (e.g. hotels, factories, shops etc.).

- However, annual dwelling fire fatalities have fallen by 142 between 1996 and 2006 and there was also no reported increase in the average burn size of Other Buildings fires reported to CLG (through FDR1 forms). An increase in the frequency of fires discovered by smoke alarms suggests that the impact of increased response times may have been off-set by improved fire safety precautions and Community Fire Safety (CFS) over this period.
- Statistical analysis suggests that out of all the factors considered, traffic level is the predominant factor associated with increased response times. Traffic levels have increased by about 14 per cent in the study period for England.
- Because traffic levels are generally beyond direct FRS control, and are likely to rise further, a number of other actions should be considered in order to mitigate the increased risk of extended response times. Options for reducing the impact of traffic levels already exist and any proposed strategies should be based on local needs, risks, resources and discussion with partners such as local authorities, the Highways Agency etc.

3.0 Next Steps

- 3.1 CLG will consider, with appropriate stakeholder organisations how best to further disseminate the report's findings and develop strategies for tackling the impact of increasing traffic on FRS response times.

Rafal Pisula

Research and Statistics Division