

Chief Fire Officers (Scotland)

10 August 2011

Dear Chief Officer

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER (SCOTLAND) LETTER 11/2011

SCOTTISH OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE BOARD: HANDLING OF RISK CRITICAL INFORMATION and UPDATE ON GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT PUBLICATION

1. [FSC\(S\) 5/2010](#) was issued on 19 March 2010 regarding the provision of Operational Guidance for Fire and Rescue Services in Scotland but specifically focussed on Generic Risk Assessments (GRAs). This DCOL(S) provides an update of the role of the Scottish Operational Guidance Board (SOGB) in the handling of risk critical information and the publication of GRAs.

PROCESS FOR RISK CRITICAL INFORMATION

2. I have recently consulted with Chief Officers with respect to the role of the SOGB in disseminating Risk Critical information. I can confirm that following a positive response to this exercise that this DCOL(S) also confirms those arrangements as set out beneath.
3. The central dissemination of information on significant safety events is important as it allows:
 - Experiences to be shared between fire and rescue services
 - Timely remedial action to be taken by other fire and rescue services and
 - The informed development of effective, useful, central health and safety guidance
4. Where services believe a risk critical event has occurred which has wider implications for the fire and rescue service they should contact SFRAU as soon as practicable and, where possible, within 24 hours of the occurrence. SFRAU will then agree with the service some initial points on the information or event and consult with as many

SOGB members or member organisations as can be reasonably practically achieved. The need to achieve a timely dissemination of the risk critical information will however, be of prime importance and this consultation process will not delay the provision of information to services. SFRAU will also liaise during this process with the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisors in England, Wales and Chief Officer Northern Ireland to ensure any UK wide implications are considered as appropriate. Where appropriate, we may also take advice from Scottish Government Legal Division.

5. When SFRAU are notified of an event that occurs out with of Scotland which has implications for Scottish Fire and Rescue Services the same process will also be followed. On receipt of that information, we will make every effort to clarify key concerns and issues and consider the issue in the context of these revised handling arrangements.
6. The SOGB will not act as an expert advisor but will seek to agree and offer in a timely manner some practical suggestions on response to the information with a view to then circulating this to services. This is likely to include:
 - A brief description of the incident
 - Initial areas of investigation
 - Reasonable and proportionate actions that other services would be recommended to take
 - References to any supporting or other relevant material
7. The information circulated would then be reviewed and signed off by the SOGB retrospectively with any appropriate amendments being made as necessary through a formal sign off process. This would also hold true in due course once the outcome of any investigatory process had been completed and made known. The arrangements for alerting SFRAU to risk critical issues will also be included in future arrangements for notification of incidents of special interest which are currently being revised

GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT PUBLICATION

8. The Scottish Operational Guidance Board (SOGB) has adopted the role of ratifying Operational Guidance, including GRAs prior to release in Scotland. All major relevant stakeholders are members of the Board and contribute to the ratification process.
9. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) are currently in the process of reviewing and updating GRAs for issue in England. During the review process, the SOGB members are involved in the consultations and feed any comments in to the process at a UK level through their respective UK organisations. The SOGB members also consider any specifically Scottish aspects to the GRAs and these are discussed by the Board prior to the GRAs being issued in Scotland as 'Good Practice'. Once the Board has signed off the GRA, it will be issued through a Dear Chief Officer (Scotland) Letter from this office. Previous discussion within the SOGB has led to an agreement that the Board acts as an 'authorising body' in respect of operational guidance.
10. Updated GRAs which have already been issued by DCLG are listed at Annex A. Any new or updated GRAs will be issued as soon as practically possible through the process outlined above.

11. In due course, we would expect that the GRAS will form part of a general reference suite of operational guidance which will fall under the stewardship of the Board.

12. These arrangements replace those contained in Dear Firemaster Letter 2/2001 Item B which is hereby withdrawn. I would ask that you bring these new arrangements to the attention of relevant staff within your service.

Yours sincerely



STEVEN TORRIE

Head of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit

Annex A

GRA NO.	ISSUE DATE	DESCRIPTION	WEB LINK
1.1	16/09/2009	Emergency response and arrival at the scene	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra11
2.1.3	29/01/2010	Trenches/Pits	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra213
2.2	30/12/2009	Ice and Unstable Ground	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra22
2.5	06/12/2010	Large Animal Rescues	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra25largeanimalrescues
3.1	24/03/2011	Fighting fires in buildings	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra31
3.2	17/11/2008	High Rise Firefighting, Version 2 - September 2008	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/highrise
3.4	28/06/2011	Fighting fires in open rural areas	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra34openruralareas
3.5	28/06/2011	Fighting fires in farms	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/GRA35fireinfarms
4.1	30/10/2009	Incidents involving transport systems - Road	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra41
4.2	31/01/2011	Incidents involving transport systems - Rail	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/GRA4.2
4.3	29/01/2010	Incidents involving transport systems - Air	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra43
4.5	06/12/2010	Working with Helicopters	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra45workingwithhelicopters
5.3	24/03/2011	Incidents involving chemicals	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra53
5.4	12/10/2010	Incidents involving biological hazards	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra54
5.5	31/01/2011	Incidents involving radiation	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/GRA5.5
5.7	17/11/2008	Explosives, Version 2 - Part 1	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/explosivesv2pt1
5.8	16/09/2009	Flashover, backdraught and fire gas ignitions	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra58
5.9	12/10/2010	Incidents involving asbestos containing materials (ACMs)	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra59
5.10	30/10/2009	Working at Heights	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/gra510