sefip
South East Fire Improvement Partnership

Newsletter Winter 2008

Welcome to the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) newsletter. Published on a quarterly basis we aim to keep you up-to-date with some recent example of best practice in partnership working between Fire and Rescue Services in the South East Region.

Partnership Working

Partnership is about joint interest, participation and association. It is a cooperative relationship between people or groups who agree to share responsibility for achieving some specific goal. Partnership is about investing and sharing the benefits of achieving those goals. Through the Regional Management Board the Fire and Rescue Authorities in the South East are able to work together to agree those specific goals, invest both time and money and benefit of improved service delivery and efficiency.

The board's business plan *(www.sefip.gov.uk)* sets out those shared goals and the ways in which fire and rescue authorities in the South East can work together and collaborate. Many of the activities fall within 10 work areas aligned with the national CFOA work streams further facilitating learning and sharing beyond the region. In total there are 52 projects making up the partnership working in the region.

Partnership stretches beyond the fire and rescues services, with Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements linking the wide range of public services into the community. Working through partnerships can be challenging and it is important that support is provided and learning shared. The south east fire improvement partnership through its membership of the regional improvement and efficiency partnership is able to fund the work of the RMB work areas and to share learning though its website and newsletters.

Sefip is pleased to launch a new series of newsletters dedicated to showcasing examples of partnership working and sharing learning across the region.

Phil Dickens
Regional Improvement Officer

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NEWS FLASH...

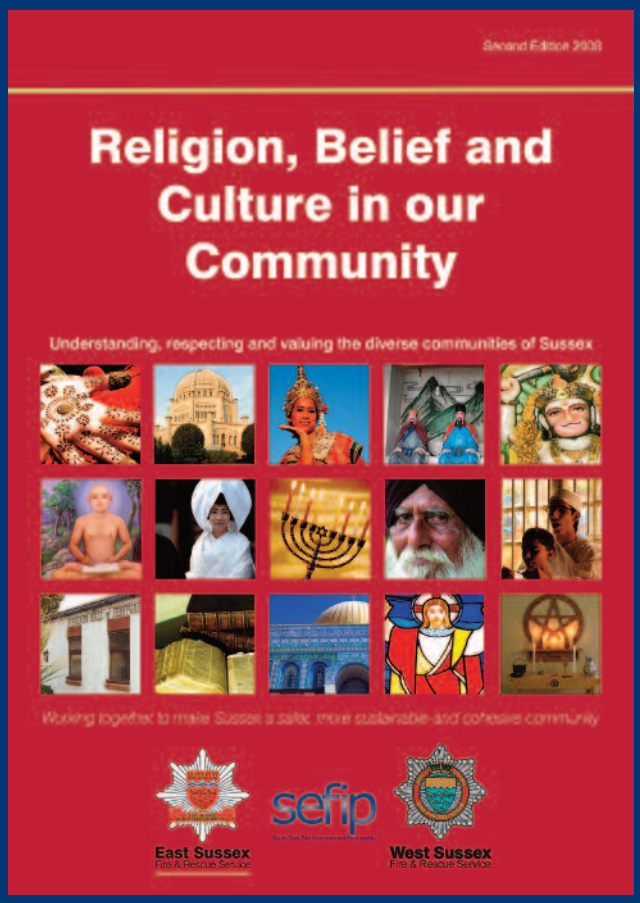
Here we look at some of the most recent examples of how partnership work within the South East is evolving and constantly moving forward…

- Video conference facilities have now been installed at Buckinghamshire and Kent, and are currently being installed at Isle of Wight and Hampshire's Rushmoor site. So far, using a model developed by SEFIP, it is estimated that this has saved nearly £6k in its first 3 months of use.

- All FRAs have agreed to use the IESE contract portal as a contracts data base and a standard tender evaluation model is in development and will be available along with the national fire appliance tender templates developed by the Regional Procurement Manager.

- Work related to improving how FRAs deal with incidents involving water rescue culminated in a water rescue seminar hosted by HFRA. This brought together practitioners and providers of equipment to share good practice and ideas. A briefing note will be available on the SEFIP website soon.

- Following excellent early work by the region, the Premises Risk Information project in the RMB plan has now been elevated to a national project and Bill Welsh (Kent) has now been seconded to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisersÿ Unit to carry out the work.



- The East and West Sussex Belief and Culture book has been published in association with SEFIP. The guide has been prepared to increase awareness of some of the cultures, which make up the modern Sussex community. The guides will be available throughout each Service and within the community and will help to provide a better understanding of religion within the diverse community.

Health Monitoring equipment display proves a great success

The Service Training Centre proudly hosted the Regional Compartment Firefighting Forum, featuring a display of the new health monitoring equipment being trialled by ESFRS. The equipment monitors the result of physical strains put upon the body such as the impact on heartbeat and breathing.
The day was built around a breathing apparatus display in the demonstrator unit with scientist Eddie Fletcher analysing the data being fed back from the individual's exertions.

Services from West Sussex, Hampshire, Gatwick Airport, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Kent, London, Surrey and Transitional Fire attended the Forum.

The attendees were so impressed that Eddie Fletcher has now been booked to speak in four of the Services already.

Thanks to Jack Tudor, Matthew Ford-Enfield, Matt Starkey and the rest of the STC Team for the part they played in the day's success.

Flying the flag for PRIDE in Brighton

East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey Fire & Rescue Services all took part in this year's Pride event, walking the mile long route from Madeira Drive to Preston Park with a decorated, colourful, fire appliance in tow. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service worked in partnership with neighbouring Fire & Rescue Services delivering fire safety advice during the festival at Preston Park.

Pride in Brighton & Hove promotes equality and diversity, and advances education to eliminate discrimination against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) community. It raises awareness of these issues by facilitating and promoting a series of events including the legendary summer festival and parade. Pride's key objective is to develop an environment in favour of LGBT equality by providing information, advice and support.

There were almost fifty different floats that took part in the Brighton parade this year. Fabulous costumes represented countries and cities from all over the globe which was the central theme of this year's PRIDE.

Partnership Working - Fire Investigation Dogs

Things are looking busy for the fire investigation dogs in several counties thanks to an agreement between East Sussex, West Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire to provide full-time investigation dog cover. Previously, cover was sporadic, as there were times when a dog was needed to assist an investigation and none were available. That has now changed since the agreement came into force. Thought to be the first inter-Service arrangement of its kind involving fire investigation dogs, it has improved the cover of the four counties and ensures resilience around the region.

Fire investigation dogs are an important weapon in the Fire Investigation toolbox and the fight against arsonists, trained in sniffing out flammable liquids, such as petrol, paraffin and barbecue fluid at fire scenes. They can quickly find where fires have started and how, providing Fire Investigation Officers with valuable clues to help with their work.

The four dogs and their handlers now work on a rota system, meaning that as well as their normal day duties within their 'home' area, one will always be available to cover the other three counties during evenings and weekends, providing a full-time 24-hour service in fire investigation.

The handlers and dogs that you might meet are:

West Sussex – Bas Wood and Hattie
(a golden Labrador)
East Sussex – Sarah Jones and Sam
(an English Springer)
Hampshire – Graham Howlett and Saxon
(a black Labrador)
Surrey – Steve Craig and Max
(a black Labrador)

Chairman of the South East Fire and Rescue Services Regional Management Board

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority chairman Councillor David Rowlands took over as Chairman of the South East Fire and Rescue Services Regional Management Board (RMB) in April 2008.

The RMB comprises representatives of the region's nine fire and rescue services and the nine local authorities responsible for running them. It was established in 2004 to optimise collaborative working in key areas such as training, improving resilience and establishing regional control centres.

David's first job in his new role was to welcome Fire Minister Parmjit Dhanda, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, to a meeting in Reigate, Surrey on 2 April.

David, who lives in Winslow, has been chairman of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority since July 2004 and a member of the authority and its predecessors since 1993 (fire and rescue came under the remit of Buckinghamshire County Council's public protection committee until the creation of a unitary authority for Milton Keynes in 1997).

He has been vice-chairman of the South East Fire and Rescue Services Regional Management Board for the past year.

He said: "The south east is the largest and fastest growing region in the country, and the board has an important role to play in ensuring that we work efficiently and effectively together to make our communities safer.

"It enables fire and rescue services to work together to provide an efficient, effective and economical response to many of the operational and organisational challenges they face."

David also represents Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority on the Local Government Association Fire Forum and is national vice-chairman of the Public Transport Consortium for Shire Counties.

He was elected to Aylesbury Vale District Council in 1991 and Buckinghamshire County Council in 1993. He is a former chairman of the county highways and public transportation subcommittee and a former district cabinet member.

David entered local government following careers with the Royal Marines and in sales management with Schweppes and other major companies.

Coaching For A Safer Community

Each year thousands of children, young people and adults are injured or killed through fires or road traffic collisions.

In an attempt to drive down these figures and keep communities safer, East & West Sussex Fire & Rescue Services work in partnership with Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club, trying to instil in young people and adults alike, fire and road safety messages through the medium of football.

The Coaching for a Safer Community project is absolutely unique and aims to teach young people how to lead a safer life, assess danger more effectively and be better equipped to deal with life itself through a range of exciting football activities.

Over 180,000 people across the county of Sussex have been educated in important road and fire safety messages so far and many young people and adults have benefited in learning vital fire safety advice through the medium of football.

The official launch of the Coaching for a Safer Community project was recently held at East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Training Centre in Maresfield. The launch provided an opportunity for qualified emergency services coaches to demonstrate what the project involves as well as a wide range of achievements to-date through a variety of presentations and practical demonstrations. The launch also provided an official occasion in which to thank the sponsors and partners of the project for their continuing support. External funding has been a significant part of the success of the Coaching for a Safer Community project. Sussex County Football Association and the Football Foundation have demonstrated their commitment by part-funding the project for the next five years.

The Coaching for a Safer Community project works in partnership with Brighton & Hove Albion and Sussex County Football Association and they have collectively devised and delivered two Football Association Level 1 Emergency Services Coaching Courses for Fire, Police and ambulance personnel in Sussex. The objective is to train a broad range of emergency service staff to assist with the project in their local communities.

Chief Fire Officers

Damian Smith, CFO of Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service was recently put through his paces at a crisis management exercise based on a major fire in a town centre office block.
To add to the pressure, his every move was assessed by his counterparts from Thames Valley's other two fire brigades – John Parry from Oxfordshire and Iain Cox from Royal Berkshire.

It was staged at a special training suite at Marlow Fire Station, using video footage, role-players and a real incident command communications unit.

All three CFOs were assessed during the day, taking it in turns to don the incident commander's white tabard. Every move and decision was beamed by live video feed into an assessment room, where the two remaining CFOs observed and critiqued the performance ready for an immediate assessment and an after-the-incident debrief.

Damien Smith said: "I wanted to take part in this assessment because it is obviously essential to the communities of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes that I am competent in the role.

"It is also vital that my own brigade is confident that I can do all that is necessary to manage a large and complex operational incident."

Each of the CFOs was assessed on how he received the exercise briefing, took command of the exercise, managed the resources at his disposal, performed during a high-level meeting with other emergency services and handled media interest.
Coordinated and facilitated by Mark Watson, Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service's Incident Command trainer, the three simulated command exercises took around six months to create. Each plan was specific to the individual CFO, and set in a real location within their county boundaries.

Mark said: "The three CFOs do not often get the chance to carry out high-level, hands-on, tactical, 'on scene' command. This is the first time ever that all three CFOs from the Thames Valley have done this together, and been able to critique each other's performance.

"I am not aware of this level of assessment having occurred elsewhere in the country.""
The day's 20 role players, mainly members of the respective fire services, also included two senior officers from Thames Valley Police and a railway incident officer.

The special suite at Marlow Fire Station has been developed to facilitate this type of role-playing exercise, and other types of incident command simulation. With CCTV strategically placed around the building, both facilitators and assessors are able to review the performance in a room remotely and discuss issues in private.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Andy Hickmott said: "Assessment and simulation of this nature supports one of our principal aims to provide opportunities for incident commanders of all levels, to participate in realistic, challenging simulations where they can practise and demonstrate their ability in commanding incidents."

Just for the record, All the Chief Fire Officers were shown to be fully competent in all aspects of incident command!

Hampshire's Urban Search and Rescue team join forces with Royal Berkshire firefighters in trench rescue

At 15:31 on Wednesday 6 August 2008, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service's specialist Urban Search and Rescue team was called to assist Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service in the rescue of amale trapped in a collapsed trench.

The 44-year-old labourer was digging in an 8ft deep drainage trench at a farm in Shaw, Berkshire, when the walls of the trench caved in on him. Royal Berkshire mobilised five fire appliances and two Rapid Support Vehicles to the scene, along with water rescue resources, in an attempt to make the trench as safe as possible.

With the male still trapped but not believed to be in a life threatening situation, the Service also requested the assistance of Hampshire's specialist Urban Search and Rescue team.

A six hour battle to free the casualty then followed, as the crews took their time to extricate him safely, with as much regard to the safety of the casualty and the rescuers as possible. On arrival at the incident, Hampshire's USAR team shored up the collapsed trench in order to achieve an effective extraction.

The trapped man was successfully rescued from the collapsed trench at 20:39 and was removed to hospital by air ambulance after the extensive rescue operation involving 60 firefighters.