

Northumberland County Council

Fire & Rescue Plan

2014 - 2017



NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council



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Versions of the document in Large Print, Braille, Audio, other formats or languages can be requested from the following contact point:

Reception	01670 621110
Telephone	0845 600 6400 (you may be charged if you call on a mobile)
Fax	01670 713653
Textphone	01670 620158
Typetalk	018001 0845 600 6400
Email	ask@northumberland.gov.uk

You can also phone us on a local number for your area. (details available on our website).

FOREWORD

Welcome to our Fire and Rescue Plan 2014 – 2017. The purpose of our plan is to describe the main risks to our communities here in Northumberland and how we will use our available resources efficiently to reduce those risks. We will also tell you how well we have performed in reducing and managing risk or, where this is not possible, where we have reduced the impact.

Described in our recent operational assessment and peer challenge as a lean organisation, we are performing well. Ensuring value for money, we already have a multi-skilled and flexible workforce, supported by apprentices and volunteers. Well versed in partnership and collaboration, we look forward to developing this further as part of the Council's Local Services.

Since local reorganisation in 2009, Northumberland County Council (the Council) has delivered £100 million in efficiencies. For the Fire Authority, this has resulted in a 12.5% cut in revenue budget, with over 20% cut in management posts. The Authority has seen a 25% reduction in wholetime firefighter posts, countered with an increase of 25% in retained firefighter posts.

However, we face further challenging times. By 2017 the Council will have to find a further £130 million in cuts and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) must deliver its share. We must re-visit our risk profile and consider new or increased risk such as flooding. We must ensure that we continue to provide high quality prevention and protection activity to those most at risk, whilst providing a well-equipped and highly trained workforce to respond to incidents when required.

We look forward to working with you to as we continue to make Northumberland a safer place to live, work and visit.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Ledger'.

Councillor David Ledger

Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for NFRS



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Bennett'.

Alex Bennett

Chief Fire Officer

1. Introduction

Fire and rescue authorities have a number of duties as set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Under the Act, fire and rescue authorities must:

- ▶ **Promote fire safety, including the provision of information and publicity on how to prevent fires, and on the means of escape from buildings in case of fire**
- ▶ **Extinguish fires and protect life and property in the event of fires**
- ▶ **Rescue people and protect people from serious harm in the event of road traffic accidents**
- ▶ **When necessary deal with emergencies other than fires and road traffic accidents**

Additionally, the Service supports the Council in its responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Providing business and other responsible persons with education, advice and guidance, we will prosecute only when it is in the public's best interests to do so.

Fire and rescue authorities in England have a responsibility under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012 (the Framework) to '**identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their communities might face**'.

In particular, fire and rescue authorities have three priorities:

- ▶ **To identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately**
- ▶ **To work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service**
- ▶ **To be accountable to communities for the service they provide**

Fire and rescue authorities are required to produce an integrated risk management plan which will tell communities how it will deliver those priorities. In Northumberland, following feedback from our communities, we call this our Fire and Rescue Plan. Our plan is for the next three years and will be renewed annually, at which time we will continue to review our community risk profile to ensure it remains valid.

In addition, fire and rescue authorities have a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to produce a Community Risk Register (CRR), which identifies potential risks to the community. This assists in risk management planning, including allocation of resources, training, and preparation for the response to emergency incidents. Risks identified in the CRR are reflected in our plan.

2. Risk to our communities

The County of Northumberland covers an area of 5013 km², enjoying a National Park, miles of coastline with designated areas of outstanding natural beauty, and a heritage of historic buildings, archaeological sites and monuments. Northumberland is home to major road and rail links, The Port Of Blyth, modern industrial developments, two top tier Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites and two Major Accident Hazard Pipelines (MAHP).

We have 316,000 residents, who live in 145,650 dwellings in Northumberland. By 2021, our population is set to increase to 326,832. Although it is recognised that fire and rescue authorities have worked hard in their prevention activity to reduce fire deaths in the home by half since the 1980s, we need to take note that by 2035 the number of people in our county aged 65 and over will have increased by over 68%. This has the potential to increase the risk of accidental house fires and subsequent deaths and injuries. Over 51% of the population live in 3% of urban land, largely in the South East of the county. Northumberland is a sparsely populated county, with only 63 people per km². This brings us a number of challenges for the delivery of our services.

Wages in the county are lower than the average in England; however unemployment is consistent with the national rate. More than a third of the population work in the public sector, which makes the local economy extremely vulnerable at a time of significant public sector cuts. Communities previously dominated by coal mining and heavy industry continue to face long-term worklessness. Our assessment of '**foreseeable fire and rescue service risks**' takes into account factors such as welfare systems reform, and the impact they may have on our prevention, protection and response activity.

9.4% of the population live in one of the 10% most deprived areas in England, with 26.3% classed as income deprived and 23.3% employment deprived. Income levels across Northumberland, however, vary greatly with some areas of considerable affluence. In Northumberland, crime has reduced from over 24,000 offences in 2003, to fewer than 10,000 in 2013. In 2011/12 there were 17 key offences per 1,000 population compared with an average of 38 per 1,000 in England.

Primary risks to communities in Northumberland are:

- ▶ **Death or injury in accidental dwelling fires**
- ▶ **Death or injury in road traffic collision**
- ▶ **The threat of terrorism (real or hoax)**
- ▶ **Major incidents including:**
 - ▶ **Widespread flooding**
 - ▶ **Main east coast rail incident**
 - ▶ **Wildfire incidents**

3. Your Service

Under the Framework, fire and rescue authorities have a responsibility to **'deliver effective and proportionate prevention and protection activities and be ready to respond to incidents within their areas and across the county to keep communities safe'**.

To help us meet this responsibility we employ:

- ▶ **146 whole time operational personnel (including officers)**
- ▶ **218 retained (part-time) personnel**
- ▶ **16 fire emergency control room personnel**
- ▶ **44 corporate support and delivery personnel**
- ▶ **7 apprentices (Business Administration and Customer Service)**
- ▶ **30 volunteers**

We currently have 17 community fire stations in Northumberland, delivering services 365 days a year. The Service received around 7,000 calls, attended 3145 incidents in 2012/13 and utilises a number of duty systems based on risk.

Wholetime Duty System:

the Service has two wholetime community fire stations in the south east of the county which is largely urban. Operational firefighters work 10 hour day shifts, and 14 hour night shifts.

Day Staffing:

the Service has two Community Fire Stations with firefighters working during the day for a 12 hour shift period, and responding following pager alert during the 12 hour night shift.

Retained Duty System:

In rural areas, firefighters who live or work within five minutes of the station will respond to a pager alert if there is an incident in their area.

Holy Island:

Holy Island has a garaged fire engine. Firefighters from Berwick, Belford and Seahouses Community Fire Stations will respond to an incident using the fire engine and equipment stored on the island where appropriate.



4. The service we provide for you

As a fire authority we must 'demonstrate how **Prevention, Protection and Response activities will be best used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a cost effective way**'.

Prevention

In partnership with the Council's Children's Services, we have established Sure Start Centres at six rural fire stations across the county. Stations have become rural hubs for the community, assisting in reducing risk and supporting early intervention. In addition, food banks have been established on a number of stations, supporting local communities. The Service delivers a risk based Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) Programme by; ensuring all families identified through the Supporting Families Programme are offered a HFSC, establishing a formal arrangement with Adult Services to offer all service users a HFSC, providing training for Social Housing Providers to deliver HFSCs, using software programmes and classification tools to prioritise lone adults who are over 65 years of age and represented in one of the geo-demographic groups most at risk, and taking account of response standards when prioritising risk. Further work with *Think Family* includes the delivery of a bespoke programme designed to meet the needs of identified families, who would benefit from the development of mutual trust and respect. The Young Firefighters Association is a programme for 13 – 17 year olds, and is delivered from community fire stations across Northumberland. Each year, the young people come together to compete in an annual drill competition, and for summer camp. We work in partnership with the *Prince's Trust* and funding colleges to deliver *the Team Programme*. This is a development programme for unemployed young people aged 16 to 25, and once again is delivered from community fire stations across the county, with the aim of getting young people into education, employment or training. We support the Council's apprenticeship programme, and have been hugely successful in achieving positive outcomes for our young people. We work with volunteers in a number of roles to deliver prevention activity, and aim to develop this further across Local Services, in support of the Council's Core Strategy and Local Delivery Plan.

Protection

The Service's Fire Safety Department has established strong relationships with businesses in Northumberland, in order to support them in their responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Partnerships with the Council's Building Control and Licensing will continue to

strengthen under the governance of Local Services. The team delivers a risk based audit programme. In addition, the county has 5,500 listed buildings, and the team has established a schedule of heritage site inspections. Fire Safety Officers work closely with our operational firefighters to carry out joint visits to high risk commercial premises across the county. This is resulting in the development of Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) plans, critical in reducing risk to firefighters when responding to incidents.



Response

The Service is fully committed to the prevention of fires and other emergencies, and to the protection of our communities. However, fire and rescue authorities also have a responsibility to **'make provision to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic accidents and emergencies within their areas and in other areas in line with mutual aid agreements'**.

To help us meet this requirement, the Service deploys:

- ▶ 24 frontline fire engines
- ▶ 24 4x4 vehicles (including specialist cutting equipment and fogging units)
- ▶ 3 Swift Water Rescue Vehicles (SRT) including powered boats
- ▶ 1 Specialist Rescue Unit (SRU)
- ▶ 1 Incident Support Unit (from Summer 2014)

Our mutual arrangements under Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 are robust. This means we can ask our bordering fire and rescue authorities for assistance when there is an increased risk to our communities.

The Government retains strategic responsibility for national resilience;

however we support this responsibility locally by deploying:

- ▶ 1 High Volume Pump (HVP)
- ▶ 1 Incident Response Unit (IRU)
- ▶ 2 High Volume Pump Tactical Advisors
- ▶ 2 National Incident Liaison Officers

The Service has long recognised the benefits of co-locating with partners such as Sure Start, North East Ambulance Service, Northumbria Police and North of Tyne Mountain Rescue Teams. The authority is collaborating with partners in Local Services to develop a shared site in the North of the County as part of the Council's Depot Rationalisation Strategic Plan, and is considering other options for shared accommodation in order to achieve efficiencies and provide effective and efficient collaboration. Other Local Services partnership arrangements include the support of Winter Services to deliver the Council's gritting programme, community intelligence provision, and the continued support of Local Multi Agency Partnerships (LMAPS).

With a responsibility to respond to incidents such as road traffic accidents, the Service has a commitment to road safety. Our Service chairs the Northumberland Road Safety Group on behalf of Local Services, ensuring partners work effectively together to reduce the number of killed or seriously injured on our roads.

Under the Framework, **'Fire and rescue authorities must collaborate with other fire and rescue authorities to deliver interoperability'**. We have been working in partnership with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) to deliver a new resilient solution for receiving emergency calls and to mobilise and manage resources. In addition, there are plans to collaborate with a remote fire and rescue authority to provide further resilience during times of spate. Our new Fire Control further supports the Council by providing an out of hours emergency contact service.

Civil contingencies

It is made clear in the Framework that **'Fire and rescue authorities must have effective business continuity arrangements in place in accordance with their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and to meet the full range of service delivery risks'**. We have a team within our Service with responsibility for Civil Contingencies on behalf of the Council. The Team works within the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to develop a Community Risk Register for Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. The role of the team is then to prepare and plan for emergencies within Northumberland, and protect and support communities when emergencies occur. The Civil Contingencies Team drives business continuity and emergency planning across the Council.

Priorities for the team are to:

- ▶ Identify and record risks in a Community Risk Register
- ▶ Prepare appropriate emergency response plans
- ▶ Train our staff
- ▶ Test arrangements through regular exercises
- ▶ Apply learning to review and amend plans



5. How well are we performing?

A robust process for measuring and reporting against performance ensures the authority regularly monitors outcomes for our communities. Detailed information about our performance can be found at www.northumberland.gov.uk. We have summarised our performance for you below:

In 2012/13 the Service:

- ▶ Attended a total of **3145** incidents
- ▶ Attended **172** dwelling fires
- ▶ Attended **220** Road Traffic Collisions
- ▶ Fitted **9951** smoke detectors
- ▶ Gave fire safety advice to **10087** households
- ▶ Engaged **9945** young people
- ▶ Visited **157** schools
- ▶ Delivered **3493** personnel training days

2007/08 to 2012/13

- ▶ Reduced deliberate primary fires by **65%**
- ▶ Reduced deliberate secondary fires by **61%**
- ▶ Reduced all primary fires by **42%**
- ▶ Reduced injuries from primary fires by **67%**
- ▶ Reduced accidental dwelling fires by **17%**
- ▶ Reduced fires in non-domestic premises by **56%**
- ▶ Reduced malicious false alarms attended by **66%**
- ▶ Reduced false alarms caused by fire detection systems by **46%**

Since we started to produce our Fire and Rescue Plan 2003/04 – 2012/13

- ▶ Reduced deliberate secondary fires by **73%**
- ▶ Reduced all primary fires by **60%**
- ▶ Reduced injuries from primary fires by **76%**
- ▶ Reduced accidental dwelling fires by **38%**
- ▶ Reduced fires in non-domestic premises by **72%**
- ▶ Reduced malicious false alarms attended by **79%**
- ▶ Reduced false alarms caused by fire detection systems by **51%**

Note: 2013/14 data is not available at this time

Our progress against priorities for 2012/13

We have made significant progress against the priorities we identified for 2012 – 2013, whilst recognising that some are long term and so remain in our new plan.

- ▶ **We have worked in partnership with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service to deliver our new Fire Control, increasing resilience and contributing significant savings on behalf of the Council.**
- ▶ **We have delivered our Operational Assessment and Peer Challenge. Feedback has been extremely positive, however, we have ensured any areas for learning have been recorded either here in our plan as a priority or in our service plan as an action.**
- ▶ **Significant progress has been made in terms of partnership and collaboration, and we look forward to developing this further under the governance of Local Services.**
- ▶ **Our health and safety review has been completed and we are progressing through the actions identified in order to fully implement all recommendations.**
- ▶ **Our new priorities will support us in ensuring we have taken full account of risks to our communities, allocated resources efficiently and effectively to reduce those risks, and evaluated proportionately to measure impact.**



6. The way forward

Our fire and rescue authority's plan **'provides an opportunity to demonstrate how it will discharge its responsibilities'**. It fully supports the Council's strategic priorities and Local Service themes.

The Council's strategic priorities are summarised as follows:

Economic Growth

Our aim is to promote a more prosperous county through sustainable economic growth that provides residents with ready access to high wage and skilled jobs and opportunities to create thriving businesses.

Places and Environment

Our aim is to maintain and further improve the quality of our towns, villages and countryside, and make it easier for residents to access services and high quality, affordable homes and to travel using different modes of transport.

Stronger Communities and Families

Our aim is to ensure that all residents genuinely feel safe, belong, and have a say in how the county is run, and to provide a range of quality community and cultural services and facilities which will inspire creativity and inspiration.

Health and Well Being

Our aim is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to lead healthy, independent lives for as long as possible and to safeguard our most vulnerable residents in a way that maintains their dignity and confidence.

Developing the Organisation

Our aim is to grow a unified Council where all staff and elected members understand their role and are collectively motivated to deliver excellent services as effectively and efficiently as possible within limited resources.

Underpinning the Council's Strategic priorities are four Local Services themes as follows:

- ▶ Maximising opportunities to work in partnership to support achievement of our priorities
- ▶ Promoting economic growth, places and the environment
- ▶ Promoting stronger communities and families, and health and wellbeing
- ▶ Developing the organisation through the modernisation of local services

Supporting those four common themes the Council's Local Services, and therefore Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, will provide **demand (and expectation) management** whilst **delivering an active council**.

As your local Fire and Rescue Service we aim to:

- ▶ Reduce the number of fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies occurring in Northumberland
- ▶ Reduce the number of deaths and injuries and mitigate the commercial, economic and social cost of emergency incidents
- ▶ Safeguard the environment and heritage sites (both built and natural)
- ▶ Support communities to protect themselves from harm
- ▶ Provide value for money through the provision of a lean, efficient and resilient service



Contributing to those strategic aims and reflecting areas for consideration highlighted in our recent peer challenge,

the Service has five priorities as follows:

1. Undertake a county wide community risk review

We will review key risks to our communities in order to identify priorities and inform our service delivery.

2. Carry out a full review of how we manage and deliver our service

We will use the results of the community risk review to ensure our resources are deployed effectively and efficiently, in order to improve community safety and support the health and well-being of our communities.

3. Implement the outcomes of the organisational health and safety review

We will ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees, service users and other persons who may be affected by our service. We will action the recommendations identified by the health and safety review and, in addition, take cognisance of emerging health and safety concerns.

4. Develop an organisational strategy for evaluation and quality assurance

We will ensure robust quality assurance and evaluation underpins priority areas of service delivery as identified in outcomes of the community risk review.

5. Actively seek opportunities to work in partnership and collaboration, both internally and externally, to deliver added value to our communities

Working in partnership, we will develop community fire stations at Alnwick and Hexham. We will continue our aspiration for Berwick community fire station. We will explore further opportunities for collaboration through co-location, and we will further integrate with Local Services to ensure we work smarter, leaner and deliver an intelligence based service for our communities.

Glossary of terms

▶ Accidental Dwelling Fires	▶ Unplanned fire in the home
▶ Corporate Support	▶ People who work for the fire and rescue service but who do not attend emergency incidents
▶ COMAH	▶ Control of Major Accident Hazards
▶ CRR	▶ Community Risk Register
▶ HVP	▶ High Volume Pump - used to clear flood water
▶ IRU	▶ Incident Response Unit - used at an incident where mass decontamination is required
▶ LRF	▶ Local Resilience Forum - agencies working together to plan and respond to incidents
▶ MAHP	▶ Major Hazard Pipelines - Natural Gas and Ethylene
▶ Non-domestic fires	▶ Fires that are in buildings not used as a home, and usually used for business
▶ Primary Fire	▶ Fires in buildings, caravans and vehicles, or where there are casualties, or there has been a rescue, or which have caused significant financial cost
▶ Primary Risk	▶ Most important or significant risks
▶ RTC	▶ Road Traffic Collision
▶ Secondary Fire	▶ Mostly outdoor fires and include grassland, scrubland, loose refuse, rubbish containers and derelict properties
▶ SRT	▶ Swift Water Rescue, used for rescues in fast flowing water conditions
▶ SRU	▶ Specialist Rescue Unit, used for rescuing people or animals when the circumstances are complex or unusual
▶ ISU	▶ Incident Support Unit, used to support the command and control of emergency incidents
▶ Wildfire	▶ An uncontrolled fire often occurring in wildland areas. Differs from other vegetation fires by its size, resource requirements and risk



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