

Community Safety – Our Plan

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service 2007-2010



strat • e • gy
noun: a plan of action or policy designed
to achieve a major or overall aim

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Foreword



Councillor Joanna Spicer
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Suffolk County Council



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Director of Public Protection and
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Suffolk County Council

Our Community Safety Prevention Plan for 2007–2010 outlines how Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service intends to work in partnership to deliver our community fire safety objectives.

Suffolk County Council continues to be committed to improving the safety and quality of life for residents and visitors to Suffolk. The Fire and Rescue Service of course, plays a major part in supporting these aims.

Much change continues within the Service, which is aimed at improving the safety of our communities. Our staff make a valuable contribution to public safety in Suffolk. We are currently:

- Carrying out more work with our partners to support older and vulnerable people to make them safer at home.
- Focusing our resources and efforts onto those who are most at risk from fire and fire related crime.
- Engaging with children and young people to protect them from fire, providing education to reduce road traffic collisions and supporting the development of citizenship.
- Developing our role and culture to reflect the wider community safety agenda and a partnership approach to this work.
- Planning and trying out new initiatives and pilot schemes where these support and promote a safer Suffolk.

This plan focuses on the prevention and protection role of the Fire and Rescue Service. Through combining our emergency response to incidents with a more proactive and education based approach the service will reduce the number of people killed and injured in fires in the home and the number of dwelling fires. We also intend to improve our targeting of activities so that our resources are used efficiently and effectively to best effect.

Our objectives cannot be achieved in isolation. We are required to and strongly support the wider agenda for community safety and are totally committed to working in partnership to make Suffolk safer.

Key Messages

In 2007 we attended 363 fires in the home.

The trend in fires in the home has remained relatively stable over a period of 5 years.

Most fires in the home in Suffolk start in the kitchen.

Deaths from fire normally occur in the home and normally involve smoking, alcohol and or drugs

We attended 181 fires in 2007 in buildings other than the home.

On average 8 people are injured in this type of fire every year. The trend in this type of incident is rising.

On attending fires in the home, in 2007 we found that 16% of the fire alarms fitted were not in working order.

In 2007 4 people were killed in their homes by fire and 57 were injured.

Older persons, the young and those living on their own are most at risk

In 2007 we attended 163 fires in homes each year where no fire alarm at all is fitted. This is 39% of all the fires in homes we attended.

304 people were killed or seriously injured on Suffolk's roads last year.

32% of all people killed or seriously injured are young people aged between 17 and 24.

On average Suffolk attends 1500 deliberately started fires each year. Most of these fires involve vehicles, litter bins and grass etc.

ALL OUR COMMUNITY SAFTY WORK WILL BE CO-ORDINATED SO THAT WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE A REAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE AREAS IDENTIFIED ABOVE. OUR DISTRICT PLANS WILL CONTAIN ACTIONS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE IMPROVEMENTS IN LINE WITH THE OBJECTIVES CONTAINED WITHIN THIS PLAN.

Introduction

This document sets out our prevention priorities, objectives and targets. The document:

- Gives an overview of each priority, including information about risk factors, fire trends, and effective ways of tackling the problems.
- Sets out a framework for an initial action plan for each priority.
- Provides for the mainstreaming of community fire safety throughout our organisation from service to district and station levels.
- Lays out information about our targets and performance and how we intend to evaluate our work.

Effective implementation of this plan will be achieved through district plans, the prevention business plan and related action plans and policies. These will detail each action, the lead officer responsible, outputs, outcomes, resource requirements, agreed time scales, and methods for measuring success.

This plan will be linked to the corporate and service plans of partner organisations to maximise the impact we can have in making Suffolk safer. Our plan aims to reinforce and improve our proactive approach to protecting people through our community safety activity. This will help us to prevent emergencies occurring in the first place.

We will always respond quickly, effectively and professionally when we are called to a fire or other emergency. However, we believe that prevention is better than cure! Reducing the number of emergencies reduces the number of injuries and fatalities, distress, property damage and the economic loss which they cause.

Firefighters risk their life when attending emergencies. The safety of the public and our staff are our top priorities and we believe that where we can prevent fires and other emergencies from occurring in the first place through our community safety activities, this will contribute directly to improvements in the health, safety and wellbeing of the public and our own staff.

We have mapped incidents across Suffolk to give us an overview of people and places most at risk. We are also using the information provided by partners and other organisations to help us better target our activities.

Our statutory responsibilities

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires a fire and rescue authority to make provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in its area. Specifically, the Act requires an authority to make arrangements for the provision of information, publicity and encouragement in respect of the steps to be taken to prevent fires and death or injury by fire and for the giving of advice, on request, about:

- How to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property, and
- The means of escape from buildings and other property in case of fire.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework Document 2008/11 sets out the Government's expectations for the fire and rescue service and what is required to meet those expectations. The Framework reinforces the following broad principles where community safety is concerned:

- **Fire and Rescue Authorities should consider community fire safety, including the priority vulnerable groups in their area, in preparing their Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) and in deciding the balance of funding and resources.**
- **Fire and Rescue Authorities will be expected to target their community fire safety programme on the most vulnerable households – particularly the elderly, but also deprived households and areas, young families and Black and Minority Ethnic communities.**
- **Where Fire and Rescue Authorities will demonstrably add value, they are encouraged to actively seek to work jointly with local partners in health, social services, housing, education, the voluntary sector and other emergency services to reduce risk to the vulnerable groups, for example through our Local Area Agreement, making older people safer in their home.**
- **Fire and Rescue Authorities should have regard to the national Fire and Rescue Service Children and Young People Strategy in all work with children and young people which they undertake.**
- **Fire and Rescue Authorities should consider arson reduction and their Community Safety Partnership strategies in preparing their Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) and deciding the balance of funding and resources.**

The Crime and Disorder Act

The Crime and Disorder Act gives local authorities, the police, and other key partner agencies, specific responsibilities for tackling crime and disorder in their areas. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service aims to work in partnership to support a reduction in crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour. This plan will inform how we intend to work with partners to fulfil our obligations.

Working in partnership, these authorities are required to carry out an audit every three years, to identify the extent of these problems in their communities, and develop and implement strategies that deal effectively with them. The Secretary of State specifies that the audit should cover local priorities, as well as those crimes for which there are national targets. The new legislation also means that partnerships are required, for the first time on a statutory basis, to complete joint crime and drugs audits

Our national targets for the next three years:

- **To reduce the number of accidental fire related deaths in the home by 20% averaged over the eleven year period to 31 March 2010 compared with the average recorded in the five year period to 31 March 1999 – with no local authority fire service having a fatality rate more than 1.25 times the national average by 31 March 2010**
- **To reduce by 10% the number of deliberate fires by 31 March 2010 from the 2001/02 level.**

This section sets out the six key prevention themes and key performance criteria that we will focus on to make Suffolk safer. These key themes are our priorities and will be supported across all districts, functions and departments to help us achieve our strategic aims.

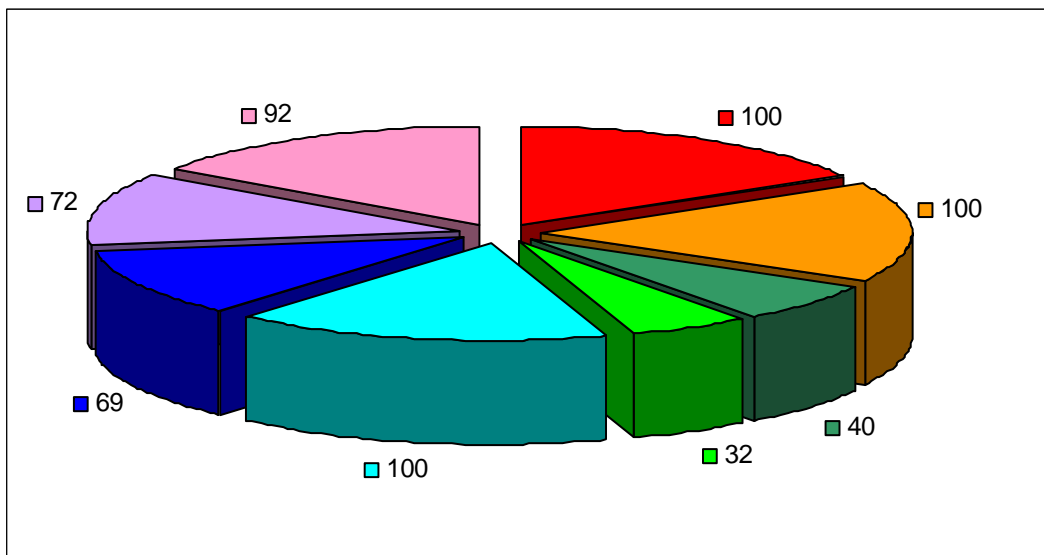


Objective 1

Increase the number and effectiveness of home fire safety checks to reduce fires in the home

ACTION - What we have already achieved:

- In 2007/08 3,766 fire alarms were fitted in homes and 2599 home fire safety checks were carried out.
- In 2008 we have implemented a new home fire safety information pack as part of our HFSC.
- We have evaluated the effectiveness of our approach to home fire safety checks (see graph below). The evaluation indicates that home fire safety checks remain an effective tool for promoting fire safety in the home. However, the evaluation also indicated that we may further develop our approach by promoting the ongoing testing of fire alarms, better promoting fire safety in the kitchen and the dangers of smoking in the home.



We asked the following questions;

	2007	2008
1 Are your smoke detectors still in place?	99%	100%
2 Are they still working?	95%	100%
3 Do you test them weekly?	14%	40%
4 If you answered no to Q3 do you test them at all?	29%	32%
5 Have you had a fire in your home since the HFSC? (% of people who answered NO)	100%	100%
6 Has the HFSC changed your behaviour?	54%	69%
7 Do you feel that you are being safer in and around your home?	53%	72%
8 Do you feel safer from fire since your HFSC?	77%	92%

- We have implemented a referral scheme to link home fire safety checks to Homeshield and Suffolk Family Carers (FACT) visits. To date we have 917 people registered with FACT. This is helping us to target our work to those who are at higher risk from fire.
- We are driving down the number of fires in thatched homes. We contacted every household on our database with information for homeowners during 2007 to explain what owners can do to reduce the risk of fire. We are continually updating our mobilising database to identify thatched buildings in Suffolk. This action helped to maintain at a low level in 2007. The number of thatch fires was 13 in 2005/06, 3 in 2006/07 and 3 in 2007/8.
- We have employed four additional staff in our prevention team in 2007 to help us increase the number of targeted home fire safety checks carried out. We will continue to proactively seek to employ staff from under represented groups to help us reinforce our message to those who may be most at risk from fire.
- From 2007 we have provided £10,000 to each of our seven districts to support firefighters at station level to deliver practical targeted prevention activities.
- We use volunteers to assist firefighters in carrying out home fire safety checks. This will help maximise our impact particularly within rural areas.

CHALLENGE - The specific focus of our work in this area is to:

- We will complete at least 3000 home fire safety checks in 2008/09, 3200 in 2009/10 and we will target these checks to those most at risk. Specifically we will:
 - ~ Place a higher priority on targeting older persons within our community for home fire safety checks.
 - ~ Place a higher priority on carrying out home fire safety checks where we identify that a dwelling is within a deprivation ward or where it is located outside of our response area timescales.
 - ~ Place a higher priority on home fire safety checks in dwellings which are of four floors and above in height, particularly where these appear to be less well managed or maintained as the risk to both occupants and firefighters in these buildings may be higher than in other building types.
 - ~ We will further reinforce kitchen fire safety, the testing and use of fire alarms and the dangers of smoking at home during home fire safety checks.

- We will develop initiatives to further reduce the number of kitchen fires in Suffolk. This may include encouraging the replacement of traditional oil fryers with fryers that are thermostatically controlled.
- We will offer checks to all occupants who have had a fire and their neighbours. This is important given the findings of the 2001 British Crime Survey, which indicated that people who had suffered a fire in their home were more likely to suffer a second fire within 12 months.
- We will increase fire alarm ownership levels in homes in Suffolk and ensure that the fire alarms fitted are tamper proof. To do this we will install at least 3700 fire alarms in 2007/08, 4000 in 2008/09 and 4200 in 2009/10. Where we find that no smoke alarm is fitted in a home, we will on all occasions offer to install one free of charge if we are in attendance, or provide information about where to get hold of a fire alarm and how to install it where we receive a request from a member of the public.

Objective 2 Tackling arson – working to reduce the number of deliberately set fires in Suffolk

ACTION - What we have already achieved:

- We support and help co-ordinate the award winning multi-agency task force initiative 'impact events' to reduce the impact of arson and anti-social behaviour in targeted neighbourhoods in Suffolk.
- We have a working protocol with Suffolk Constabulary on fire investigation to help us better work together on identifying arson.
- We have reinforced our approach to fire investigation by providing better training to our staff and have a regional approach to training standards and sharing resources.

CHALLENGE - The specific focus of our work in this area is to:

- We will reduce by 10% the number of deliberate fires by 31 March 2010 from the 2001/02 baseline. This will be achieved through initiatives covering the following areas:
 - ~ Reducing deliberate vehicle fires, both primary fires (a normal car fire) and secondary fires (fires in abandoned cars).
 - ~ Reducing deliberate fire-setting, specifically targeting refuse storage, grassland, street furniture, skip fires and areas around higher risk commercial buildings such as hotels and factories.

- ~ Raise awareness of arson issues among our own staff by providing fire investigation and other related training and ensuring that every deliberate fire is followed up with action.
- In 2007/08 we have reviewed our Arson Task Force and are working closely with Suffolk Constabulary in improving our current arrangements so that we may better co-ordinate our approach to arson prevention.
- We have mainstreamed our work and support for impact events in targeted neighbourhoods. We have led the raising of awareness of the success of this partnership approach across the wider Suffolk County Council and all partner organisations. In 2008 we will expand this type of outreach work to include evening safety events and other collaborative initiatives to minimise the risk of arson.
- We support and continue to do so, the 'Play Your Part' initiative to support local communities and fulfil our responsibilities under Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act. We have trained all our staff on how to identify and pass details of incidents affecting a community (derelict vehicles etc) to the central reporting centre.
- We will continue our risk based approach to reinforcing fire safety in buildings other than homes and will ensure that we look for the potential for arson during all our visits so that we may provide advice to minimise this risk. In addition, where we believe that arson is a problem in a specific area we will organise and run activities and campaigns to minimise this risk.

Objective 3 Children and young people – working to protect young people from fire and road accidents

ACTION - What we have already achieved:

- We have developed a three year Children and Young People Strategy 2007/10. This lays out how we intend to work in partnership to protect children and young people and contribute to wider corporate objectives in this area.
- We have a number of dedicated youth initiatives targeting those young people who need our support. These initiatives include:
 - Firebreak
 - Juvenile Fire setters Advisers
 - Princes Trust
 - Too Young to Die
 - Learn and Live
 - Roadkill
 - Crucial Crew

- We have developed a protocol with Ipswich Borough Council and The University for Suffolk on student accommodation. This sets consistent standards on risk assessment and our approach to enforcement in accommodation being let to students.
- We have developed a protocol with the Borough and District Councils of Suffolk to ensure that a consistent approach to risk assessment and enforcement is applied in Houses in Multiple Occupation. This is helping us to protect all young people who reside in this type of accommodation.

CHALLENGE - The specific focus of our work in this area is to:

- With support from the Community Safety Partnerships, we will organise and run at least five Firebreak courses in 2008 and a similar number in future years.
- We will review our young people initiatives in 2008 with a view to seeking improvements and their financial sustainability. In addition, we will seek to better integrate this work with that of Children and Young Peoples Services and our other partners.
- We will continue our support for the Safeguarding Children and Young People Board and through this seek improvements in our work with young people.
- We will seek ways to better involve young people in our work to protect them and to consult them on our new initiatives and strategies.
- We are working with CLG to employ a Student Brand Ambassador for the University of Suffolk who will deliver SFRS community safety initiatives to the students at the university

Objective 4 Partnership working – working together to make Suffolk safer

ACTION - What we have already achieved:

- We are members of the County Councils Safeguarding Children and Young People Board, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board and Roadsafe Board.
- We have implemented Partnership and Children and Young People Strategies to link our work to that of partner organisations.

- We support impact events as a result of which illegal or abandoned cars are removed, home fire safety checks carried out, smoke detectors fitted and fire hazards removed. This work is carried out in partnership in the risk areas identified by our partners.
- We work in partnership with Trading Standards to replace faulty electric blankets, improve product safety (linked to our fire investigation work) and to prevent 'doorstep crime' and other anti-social behaviour.
- We work with Homeshield to seek targeted home fire safety check referrals for older people.
- We have established a common risk assessment and enforcement protocol with the Borough and District Councils in Suffolk to promote common standards and clear responsibilities with regard to Houses in Multiple Occupation.
- We continue to work in partnership to survey all travellers sites and carry out home fire safety checks and fitted fire alarms where required in travellers accommodation on licensed sites.

CHALLENGE - The specific focus of our work in this area is to:

- We will continue to improve our partnership working. We will develop partnerships where these add value and increase our capacity and evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships. Our partnership work will underpin all our objectives to make those most at risk from fire safer.
- We will support national community safety publicity events and align local activities with this plan where these help us reduce risk in Suffolk. To support this we have produced an annual prevention activity planner linked to national campaigns and partner organisations activity to help co-ordinate and plan our safety activities.
- We will continue our efforts to proactively lobby to persuade developers, local authorities and the government to install hard wired fire alarms in all new homes so that they are working at all times and not dependent on batteries and include domestic sprinkler systems in new or refurbished premises where the risks justify it.
- We will also work with local borough and district councils and private housing associations and registered social landlords, to seek the installation of fire alarms in all existing social housing stock.
- We have strengthened our work with the voluntary organisation Suffolk Family Carers by seconding a member of their staff into our organisation in 2007 to lead on partnership working.

- We recognise that houses in multiple occupation present a special risk to people in Suffolk. Therefore, we will work in partnership with local authorities and Trading Standards to continue to improve fire safety in these premises.

Objective 5 Road safety – reducing the number of people killed and injured on Suffolk’s roads

ACTION - What we have already achieved:

- We are a member of the Suffolk Roadsafe Steering Board and contribute to road safety at strategic level. This work is contributing to achieving corporate targets to seek a reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on Suffolk’s roads.
- As well as responding to road traffic collisions and seeking improvements in this area, we also carry out proactive road safety work using our initiatives Roadkill, Learn and Live and Too Young to Die. Through these we have targeted young drivers and school children identified as being most at risk on our roads.

CHALLENGE - The specific focus of our work in this area is to:

- We will work with our Roadsafe partners to help achieve a 33% reduction (49% for children) killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions. Specifically, we will do this by:
 - ~ Working with the Youth Offending Service and other partner organisations to target our activities to those young people who have been identified as being most likely to be involved in car crime.
 - ~ Working with Suffolk Police, local councils and others in helping educate people, particularly young and often inexperienced drivers on the dangers of driving irresponsibly.
- We will contribute to the achievement of corporate targets for road safety by continuing to deliver our targeted and pro-active education initiatives to young people through our central prevention team and operational firefighters.

Objective 6 A more targeted approach to prevention activity to help those most at risk

ACTION - What we have already achieved:

- We use the Fire Service Emergency Cover Toolkit (FSEC) actively and effectively to identify risk in the community and to plan actions to reduce this risk.
- We have linked our prevention activities and plans to our risk profile and operational response to help target prevention activities.
- We have implemented a risk based classification and prioritisation system to assess the urgency of carrying out home fire safety checks and we have improved how we co-ordinate this work to ensure it is focused on those most at risk.
- We have developed a risk matrix to enable stations to target groups in their communities who are most at risk (see Appendix B).
- We continue to support the Homeshield and Fire and Carers Together (FACT) initiatives to provide fire safety advice to those most at risk from fire in their homes.
- In 2007 our firefighters received the prevention training they need to do the job of targeting those most at risk. This covered the following areas:
 - ~ Raising knowledge and confidence in relation to targeting community fire safety activities
 - ~ Providing a better awareness of local risk
 - ~ Providing a better understanding of community needs and the needs of minority groups in the community
 - ~ Providing a better understanding of our team approach and work with partners in supporting prevention activity.
 - ~ Support for the prevention planning process.
- We have improved our understanding of risk in the community so that we may target our efforts onto those most at risk from fire by:
 - ~ Implemented a prevention activity targeting policy to better focus home fire risk checks and other proactive work in areas which fall outside of our operational response areas.
 - ~ Provided information to fire stations on where the risk is highest so that they may focus their efforts in the areas of most concern to us and our partners.

- ~ Communicated our prevention objectives to our districts in a timely manner and supported the ongoing development of district based plans so that these are better aligned to service objectives and risk.

CHALLENGE - The specific focus of our work in this area is to:

- Carry out work to implement a new recording system for prevention and protection activity. We will implement the new system in 2008. This will help us to handle information about risks presented by buildings and to manage our statutory fire safety audit and inspection programme.
- We will input our home fire safety check and smoke detector fit information into our FSEC system in 2008. This will enable us to better manage and monitor our risk profile.
- We will work with the consultants Greenstreet and Berman to develop a community safety evaluation and planning toolkit to help us understand the value and impact of our work on the communities we serve.