

REPORT TO: Fire Authority

DATE: 24th September 2007

SUBJECT: Missing Persons Protocol

SUMMARY:

Officers have been evaluating a joint protocol between the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) for the search for missing persons (defined as people who are missing in circumstances that lead the police to believe the life or health of that person, or any other person, is at risk).

This protocol is intended to provide a framework for police forces and fire and rescue services to enable development of local operating procedures under which firefighters support police operations in the search for certain categories of missing persons. The protocol will also provide a procedure for police forces to access support from Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and United Kingdom Fire Service Search and Rescue teams (UKFSSART). This protocol does not affect the every day deployment of fire and rescue service personnel in the rescue or recovery of injured persons or persons at risk.

The protocol suggests several areas for deployment of fire and rescue service (FRS) personnel in search operations and covers:

- Deployment of firefighting personnel to assist in general search operations,
- Use of water borne equipment,
- Specialist search teams (USAR/UKFSSART) and Search and Rescue Dogs (K9).

Acceptance of this protocol would, undoubtedly, improve the search capabilities of both Dyfed Powys and South Wales Police Forces. Based on recent activity, the number of occasions when this protocol is likely to be put into use is extremely low. Each occasion will be a genuine, life-threatening incident, so every response to a Police request to assist in searching for a missing person would be fully in line with the Authority's role within the wider community safety agenda.

The draft service level agreement (SLA) is attached for Members.

On the 19th July, the Policy and Performance Board discussed this protocol at length, and officers agreed to support the protocol, subject to a review of its impact on resources after a year of its implementation.

IMPLICATIONS:	
OPERATIONAL RISK	Deployment of a larger number of resources on a search operation could compromise operational cover.
COMMUNITY RISK	Assisting police in search operations will lead to an improved service to communities. The use of the USAR team and dog handlers would assist in this capacity.
TRAINING	Deployment of USAR resources on police search operations may be seen as a useful training opportunity.
H.R	Minimal.
FINANCE	Deployment of a larger number of resources on a search operation could have a significant impact, with no recourse for recouping costs.
I.T/COMMS	None
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY	None
HEALTH & SAFETY	Minimal – risk assessments to be conducted prior to starting work.
LEGAL	None.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
Members are asked to consider the draft protocol for approval.
Members are also asked to support a review of this protocol in one year, to assess the impact of any activity within the year on budget and resources.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT
Service Level Agreement for Fire and Rescue Service Assistance to the Police in the Search for Missing Persons.
Fire and Rescue Services' Act 2004.
PPB Minutes 19 th July 2007 & 31st October 2006.

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**Service Level Agreement between Mid
and West Wales Fire & Rescue
Service, South Wales Police and
Dyfed Powys Police for the Search for
Missing Persons**

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Introduction

Fire and Rescue Service Authorities have an ever-widening remit to engage in activities that support the communities they serve. This developing role is reflected in the Fire Services Act 2004, which allows a fire and rescue authority to take action in a situation which causes or is likely to cause 'one or more individuals to die, be injured or become ill'.

An area of support for the community where the skills, training and equipment of fire-fighters are invaluable is the search for people who are missing in circumstances that lead the police to believe the life or health of that person, or any other person, is at risk.

This protocol is intended to provide a framework for Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) to provide fire-fighters and specialist resources to support police operations in the search for certain categories of missing persons. This protocol does not affect the every day deployment of fire and rescue service personnel in the rescue or recovery of injured persons or persons at risk.

The protocol should be read as guidance that cannot anticipate every situation. Police officers and fire and rescue service personnel must apply their professional judgement to take such action as they believe is necessary to safely recover the missing person, and ensure the safety of those engaged in searching for them.

The protocol has been developed in accordance with that written on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Chief Fire Officers Association which has also been adopted as policy by the Association of Chief Police Officers, Scotland (and the Police Service of Northern Ireland).

Search Capabilities of Fire and Rescue Service

Fire and Rescue Service personnel have been trained in specialist search techniques to locate people who may have become trapped or lost within the confines of a building or other structure. Although this training is to a higher standard than that given to the majority of Police Officers, Fire and Rescue Service personnel are not 'police search trained' and, for this reason, will always be deployed under the control of a Police Search Adviser.

Fire-fighters undertake intense training that includes preparations for:

- i Undertaking search activities in a manner that; saves life, protects from injury and, as far as practicable, preserves opportunities for forensic scene examination.
- ii Search and rescue from hazardous environments.
- iii The use of specialist equipment to search confined spaces without the need to enter.
- iv The use of water safety equipment.

In addition to the regular training given to firefighters, Mid and West Wales FRS maintains specialist search teams which are capable of operating around the world and have highly advanced expertise and equipment that allow them to undertake search

and rescue operations under the most challenging circumstances. The key capabilities of these teams include;

- i The ability to map and search collapsed structures utilizing a wide range of technical search equipment as well as physical entry.
- ii The use of human, live scent only, detection dogs capable of locating people trapped or hidden in places inaccessible to police officers. This includes collapsed structures, derelict buildings and open spaces.

These teams have been provided with an extensive range of search and rescue equipment and appropriate personal protective equipment, including:

- Drill Concrete Hammer – Light/medium concrete breaking tools.
- Hydraulic Cutting & Breaking – Heavy duty concrete cutting and breaking tools including concrete cutting chain saw.
- Core Drill – Drill used to cut holes to insert cameras, listening devices and air sampling equipment.
- Flexible Search Cameras “Snake Eye” – Used to search confined spaces and voids.
- Pole search camera “Searchcam 2000” – Used to search confined spaces and voids.
- Delsar Life Detector – Listening device used to listen through dense concrete.
- Air Bags – Lifting kit capable of lifting over 100 tonnes.
- Shoring Kit – Metal shoring used to secure and make safe structures before entry into damaged buildings.
- Timber Cutting Work Station – Used in conjunction with shoring.
- Generators – 6kw 110v and 3kw 110v.
- Lighting
- Search & Rescue Dogs – Used to search large unsafe areas quickly. All are trained to national standards.
- Thermal Image Cameras.

Definitions

The ACPO definition of a missing person is

“Anyone whose whereabouts are unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise established”.

ACPO Guidance provides that a risk assessment is undertaken at the earliest opportunity, and a decision made as to the level of risk to which the missing person, or the community, is exposed. The table below sets out the definition of each category and what each category means in terms of a police response.

High Risk	
The risk posed is immediate, and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or the risk posed is immediate, and there are substantial grounds for believing the public is in danger.	This category requires the immediate deployment of police resources and a member of the BCU senior management team or similar command level to be involved in the examination of initial enquiry lines, and approval of appropriate staffing level, the press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies.
Medium Risk	
The risk posed is likely to place subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.	This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in relation to tracing the missing person and supporting the person.
Low Risk	
There is no apparent threat of danger to either the subject or the public.	In addition to recording the information on the Police National Computer, the police will advise the person reporting the disappearance that following basic enquiries unless circumstances change, further enquiries will not be carried out by police, but the missing person's details will be passed to the National Missing Persons Helpline in line with the national protocol. However low risk missing persons must be kept under review as risk can increase with the passage of time.

Search for Missing Persons

Search is an obvious and routine element of investigating reports of missing persons. It should be considered in three phases:

- i Frequently the missing person, well or otherwise, is still within the curtilage of their home. A routine search of the home of a missing person and the immediate area should always be undertaken.
- ii The second level of search is undertaken quickly but thoroughly. This involves making an assessment from the initial enquiries as to the circumstances and undertaking a search that provides maximum coverage.
- iii The third level of search will be undertaken when the first two have failed and involves fully managed, scenario bases, systematic searching of all possible locations.

ACPO guidelines suggest that where a search is likely to be large scale or complex, the appointment of a Police National Search Centre trained Police Search Co-ordinator (POLSC) may be beneficial. In addition, advice and guidance on search matters should always be sought from a Police Search Adviser (POLSA).

Search Protocol

This document will be deemed to be the agreed protocol to allow South Wales Police and Dyfed Powys Police to seek the assistance of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service to assist with the search for Missing Persons. The document has been compiled in accordance with the protocol prepared for the Association of Chief Police Officers Missing Persons Sub-Committee and the Chief Fire Officers Association Operations Committee.

Partners to the Protocol

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

South Wales Police

Dyfed Powys Police

Request for Assistance

The police undertake to request support from the fire and rescue service only when:

The circumstances indicate that the missing person is classified in accordance with the police risk assessment as being High or Medium, and the missing person presents no danger to fire and rescue service personnel..

A POLSA has been appointed and has made an assessment that the search operation cannot be undertaken effectively without the support of FRS resources or specialist search teams.

Local agreements must not be entered into. All requests should be made through the afore-mentioned control rooms.

All requests from the Police for FRS support must include the following information.

- Details of the nature of the search, e.g. buildings, open land etc
- Location of the incident
- The assessment of risk to the missing person (i.e. Medium or high)
- The assessment of risk to fire and rescue service personnel (i.e. does the missing person present a danger to fire and rescue service personnel?)
- Contact details of the POLSA

- Details of the RVP and, if necessary, the route to be taken to the RVP
- Expected duration of the search
- Identification of a sufficient working area
- Identification of a rest area
- Provision of welfare facilities and refreshments, if required

Points of Contact

The point of contact for each organization in respect of requests for assistance is as shown below:

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Fire Control

Llangunnor

Carmarthen

01267 222044

South Wales Police

Area Control Room

Police Headquarters

Cowbridge Road

Bridgend

Tel:01656 655555

Dyfed Powys Police

To be completed

Response Times

The Fire and Rescue Service will, after determination on whether to assist, respond to a request for assistance within 2 hours whenever possible. In the event of this time scale not being achievable, the Fire and Rescue Service will inform the Police Service concerned and give a revised estimated time of arrival

Command and Control

The Fire Service accepts that the police will remain in control of the search operation and will command fire service personnel to undertake tasks relating to the search.

Risk Assessment

The police accept that fire service personnel will undertake their own Dynamic Risk Assessment prior to engaging in any search activities.

Liability

The police accept that the Fire and Rescue service personnel remain at all times working within the terms and conditions of their employment and, as such, will accept no liability for them.

Costs Incurred

All parties accept that this agreement is based on a no costs basis. Each organisation will bear its own costs for each incident.

Completion of Search Related Documentation

Fire and Rescue Service personnel will complete all police search related documentation prior to leaving the operation. The POLSA or their nominee will provide advice and guidance as to its completion. If Fire and Rescue Service personnel have to provide statements for evidential purposes, the senior investigating officer, or his nominee, will provide advice as necessary.

Training

Parties to this protocol will endeavor to undertake all necessary training to ensure that all objectives will be met. All training costs to be borne by the relevant Police Authority.

Agreement Signatures

Signed on behalf of South Wales Police

Name_____ Designation_____

Signature_____ Date_____

Signed on behalf of Dyfed Powys Police

Name_____ Designation_____

Signature_____ Date_____

Signed on behalf of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Name_____ Designation_____

Signature_____ Designation_____