

How Fire and Rescue Service Staff Manage Risk and Make Decisions at Emergency Incidents

16th EΦA Roundtable

Protection and Security of the Citizen

20th February 2013 – Ispra, Italy

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Mail

The picture that shames Britain: As a man's body floats in three feet of water, 25 emergency workers stand and watch because they aren't 'trained' to go in water

MoS investigation into park pond tragedy and emergency services' response reveals:

- Rules that stopped firemen entering water were meant for fast-flowing rivers
- Coalition 'common sense' report gives green light for heroes – but was ignored
- Our reporter, in pair of waders, took two minutes to reach spot where body floated



Walpole Park 12.52pm: The massive operation to haul Mr Burgess from the lake - 37 minutes after he was first spotted

Mail

Why were they ever charged? Fire chief's fury after pair are cleared of manslaughter following deaths of four colleagues in warehouse blaze roof collapse

- Four firefighters died tackling blaze in Warwickshire in 2007
- First time firefighters have been accused of the manslaughter of colleagues
- Criticism over £4.6million cost of inquiry
- Claims firefighters' safety was put behind needs of the police
- Accused were shown 'undue aggression' during their time in police custody



The Fieldwork



Where – Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Kent, Merseyside, Mid and West Wales

When – May through to September 2012

How – On-site semi structured interviews using a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Glaser 1967)

Changes in the operating environment :

- move to prevention activities
- falling call rates to fires – less operational ‘experiential ‘ decision skills
[Reduced number and seriousness of fires doc - Ispra Feb 2014.docx](#)
- reduced technical knowledge – removal of statutory promotion examinations
- greater complexity of incidents
- more public scrutiny
- a more litigious society
- some notable incidents where the FRS have been criticised on decision making



Sharing!!!!

The importance of an evidence-base

Identify the unintended consequences during planning – don't let it stop you!!

Reducing emergency response demand, reduces experiential learning

Capture and use the knowledge and experiences of those leaving the organisation

Remember you and your organisation could be the next 'trending sensation'

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“We all work outside the box, we break the rules it’s impossible to do it without breaking the rules. As I said earlier we were turned out to water incidents but we were told we couldn’t go in water. People did it anyway because there are times you have to do what you have to do... if it’s bad you are in trouble that is why people won’t go that extra mile now. Instead of people looking at your good intentions they look at what you didn’t do and that kills the job”. Fire Fighter

“Mastery reveals itself as breaking rules. The secret of creativity hinges on this insight, to know the right moment when you can go too far” - Karlqvist

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Next Steps

Promote the findings of the research

Further develop elements of the research

Support implementation of the recommendations

For further information:

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[Report Available at - www.belvidereconsults.co.uk](http://www.belvidereconsults.co.uk)

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