HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Service Improvement

Contaminants Policy

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Responsible person	**Head of Health, Safety, Environmental Sustainability and Organisational Learning**
Date Written	**October 2026**
Date of Review	
Date of next review	**October 2027**
EIA Reviewed	**October 2026**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) has guidance and procedures addressing elements of cleaning and decontamination for personnel, personal protective equipment (PPE), respiratory protective equipment (RPE), vehicles, premises and operational equipment. This policy provides the single overarching framework needed to coordinate those arrangements, clarify accountability and support a consistent service-wide approach.

The policy focuses on contamination associated with products of combustion, live fire training and related operational activity. It also covers relevant hazardous substances and biological contamination encountered through those activities, together with contamination arising from the handling, maintenance, cleaning, transport or storage of affected PPE and equipment.

Core Code of Ethics

HFRS has adopted the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services. The Service is committed to the ethical principles of the Code and strives to apply them in all we do; therefore, those principles are reflected in this Policy.

National Guidance

Any National Guidance which has been adopted by HFRS will be reflected in this policy.

2. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

HFRS has a legal responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, and a commitment, to insure it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly in any of its functions and services or in its treatment of staff, in relation to race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender reassignment ormarriage and civil partnership. It also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, employees, and service users.

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim: To establish a clear, coordinated and service-wide approach for preventing, minimising and managing occupational exposure to contaminants arising from fire and rescue activities, live fire training, workplaces, fleet and equipment operations, stores handling and associated processes.

Objectives

- Define the governance, ownership and responsibilities for contaminant risk management across HFRS.

- Apply the hierarchy of control to prevent exposure where reasonably practicable and otherwise reduce exposure so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Align operational, training, estates, fleet, equipment, stores, learning, occupational health and assurance arrangements.
- Embed effective contamination-control behaviours, including clean and dirty segregation, appropriate PPE/RPE, safe removal of PPE, prompt hygiene and controlled transport of contaminated items.
- Provide proportionate information, instruction, training, monitoring, audit and health surveillance.
- Ensure departments maintain documented arrangements demonstrating how they meet this policy.

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Post Fire Exposure Cleaning Policy Delivery Guidance
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Policy Delivery Guidance
- Respiratory Protective Equipment policy delivery guidance
- Station and training venue hygiene, zoning and cleaning guidance.
- Exposure, defect and incident-reporting arrangements
- Health and Safety Policies general Equality Impact Assessment
- Legal References & National Guidance:
  - Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
  - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
  - Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002, as amended.
  - Equality Act 2010.
  - National Operational Guidance relevant to decontamination and health and safety.
  - Health and Safety Executive COSHH guidance.
  - FBU and University of Central Lancashire DECON guidance on minimising exposure to toxic fire effluents.
  - Manufacturer instructions and approved technical standards applicable to PPE, RPE, BA and cleaning equipment.

5. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
BA	Breathing apparatus.
Bag and label	The approved process for containing and identifying contaminated items to prevent further exposure or cross-contamination.
Contaminant	A hazardous substance or biological material
COSHH	Control of Substances Hazardous to Health.

Term	Definition
Cross-contamination	The transfer of contamination from a person, item or area to another person, item or area.
Decontamination	A controlled process to remove, reduce or contain contamination to an acceptable level.
Departmental Contaminants Arrangement	The local document explaining how a department implements and assures this policy.
PPE	Personal protective equipment.
RPE	Respiratory protective equipment.
SCBA	Self-contained breathing apparatus.
SFAIRP	So far as is reasonably practicable.
Zoning	The controlled separation of areas or activities according to contamination risk, as defined in the relevant approved procedure.

6. GOVERNANCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibility
Chief Fire Officer	Ensure suitable governance and resources are in place and approve the policy through the appropriate process.
Deputy Chief Fire Officer with operational portfolio	Provide strategic sponsorship and support coordinated implementation across Operations, Training, Fleet, Estates and related functions.
Head of Health and Safety	Act as policy owner; maintain the service-wide COSHH framework; coordinate assurance, review and the improvement plan; provide competent advice.
Departmental leads	Produce, implement and review a Departmental Contaminants Arrangement using Appendix A; maintain relevant risk assessments, controls, records and improvement actions.
Incident commanders and nominated training leads	Apply approved zoning, PPE/RPE, decontamination, welfare and exposure-reporting arrangements at incidents and training events.
Managers and supervisors	Implement local controls, brief staff, monitor compliance, address defects and escalate risks that cannot be controlled locally.

Role	Responsibility
Occupational Health	Provide competent advice on health surveillance and referral arrangements where indicated by risk assessment, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.
Procurement and contract managers	Ensure specifications and contracts reflect applicable contamination-control, manufacturer, handling, transport, cleaning, record and assurance requirements.
All staff	Follow training and procedures; use PPE/RPE and facilities correctly; maintain personal hygiene; report exposure events, unsafe conditions and defects; cooperate with monitoring and health surveillance where required.
Representative bodies and staff networks	Contribute through consultation, workforce feedback, communication and review of practical arrangements.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND COSHH

7.1 Assessment and control

Health and Safety will maintain the service-level COSHH framework and support departments to identify activities requiring assessment. Departments remain responsible for suitable and sufficient local assessments for their activities, substances, equipment, facilities and affected persons. Controls must follow the hierarchy below and must not rely on PPE/RPE where a more effective reasonably practicable control is available.

Priority	Control approach	Examples
1	Eliminate	Remove unnecessary exposure by eliminating the hazardous activity, substance or process wherever reasonably practicable.
2	Substitution	Select lower-emission plant, safer products or less contaminating processes.
3	Engineering Controls	Segregation, zoning, ventilation, extraction, washable surfaces and controlled dirty-to-clean workflows.
4	Administrative Controls	Safe systems of work, clean-vehicle rules, bagging and labelling, restricted access, planned cleaning and maintenance, hygiene arrangements and welfare provision.
5	PPE	Suitable and correctly fitted PPE and RPE selected through risk assessment and manufacturer guidance.

7.2 Monitoring and health surveillance

Exposure monitoring, surface or air sampling and health surveillance will be introduced where a risk assessment identifies that they are required or would provide proportionate assurance. Any pilot or monitoring programme must define its purpose, responsible lead, method, record requirements and route for reporting findings before it begins.

8. OPERATIONAL AND TRAINING CONTROLS

8.1 At incidents and live fire training

- Establish and communicate appropriate operational zones in accordance with approved guidance. Station red, amber and green zoning must not be used as a substitute for incident-ground terminology unless this is explicitly defined in an approved procedure.
- Use SCBA and other PPE/RPE in accordance with operational guidance, risk assessment and atmospheric conditions. Alternative RPE must only be used where a suitable assessment confirms it is appropriate.
- Nominate responsibility for contamination control and establish a decontamination area where required.
- Undertake initial decontamination of personnel, PPE and equipment before leaving the scene or training area.
- Use approved safe undressing, bagging, labelling, containment and transport arrangements.
- Prevent contaminated PPE and equipment from entering clean vehicle cabs, welfare areas or clean storage.
- Clean hands and face before eating or drinking, shower as soon as reasonably practicable following relevant exposure and change into clean clothing

8.2 Post Incident and post-training

- Quarantine contaminated items and route them through approved cleaning, testing, repair, deep-cleaning or disposal processes.
- Record relevant cross-contamination events using the approved HFRS reporting route. This must be clearly distinguished from other operational forms and must not rely on an unapproved or ambiguous process.
- Restore appliances, equipment, PPE and welfare stocks without transferring contamination into clean areas.
- Report failed, unavailable or unsuitable controls and initiate corrective action.

9. DEPARTMENTAL ARRANGEMENTS

Each departmental lead must maintain a concise Departmental Contaminants Arrangement using Appendix A. The arrangement must distinguish between current mandatory controls, interim controls, approved improvement actions and longer-term development proposals. It must identify accountable owners and review dates.

9.1 Estates and Facilities

Objective: Reduce contamination through building design, refurbishment, maintenance, zoning, ventilation and cleaning arrangements.

Minimum requirements:

- Assess each site and define proportionate clean and dirty segregation, signage, PPE storage, BA/equipment cleaning and external containment arrangements.
- For new-build and major-refurbishment projects, consider recognised contaminant pathways and red, amber and green zoning for station and training premises.
- Assess diesel exhaust exposure and document the rationale for ventilation, extraction, idling controls and other measures.
- Ensure contaminated-water drainage, washing-machine discharge and surface-cleaning arrangements are assessed and documented.
- Maintain cyclical inspection and maintenance arrangements for engineering controls.

9.2 Fleet

Objective: Prevent contaminants entering cabs and clean stowage, support on-scene decontamination and enable controlled post-incident transport.

Minimum requirements:

- Segregate contaminated kit from crew cabs and clean lockers; use sealed bags or containers and cleanable surfaces.
- Provide approved on-scene decontamination equipment and consumables on designated appliances.
- Maintain heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems and filters in accordance with specification and planned maintenance.
- Control unnecessary engine idling and consider procedures that reduce time spent within diesel exhaust zones.
- Clean and restore vehicles through an approved process after contamination.

9.3 Operational Training

Objective: Ensure training reflects operational contamination controls and does not create avoidable exposure.

Minimum requirements:

- Apply suitable PPE/RPE, zoning, decontamination, hygiene, safe undressing and bagging arrangements to live fire and relevant practical training.
- Nominate a lead for contamination control during relevant exercises.
- Apply Estates standards to training facilities and establish cleaning frequencies

based on risk.
- Ensure control measures are included in planned inspection and maintenance.

9.4 Learning and Development

Objective: Build and maintain the knowledge, competence and behaviours required to implement this policy.

Minimum requirements:

- Provide role-appropriate learning on contaminant hazards, exposure pathways, local procedures, hygiene, PPE/RPE and reporting.
- Include specific learning for commanders, instructors, drivers, BA/equipment technicians, stores personnel, cleaners and managers.
- Maintain training records and provide proportionate refresher learning and workplace assurance.

9.5 Research and Capability

Objective: Monitor credible national and sector evidence and support the controlled evaluation of relevant changes.

Minimum requirements:

- Track NFCC, NOG, HSE and credible academic or sector developments.
- Translate accepted evidence into advice, options or proposed changes for the accountable department.
- Only undertake pilots where scope, ownership, method, resources, success measures and governance have been agreed.
- Report findings in practical terms, including risk reduction, operational impact, cost and recommended next steps.

9.6 Health and Safety

Objective: Provide the policy framework, COSHH assurance, competent support and coordinated monitoring.

Minimum requirements:

- Maintain applicable service-level COSHH arrangements and assurance tools.
- Support departments to develop suitable assessments and controls without displacing departmental ownership.
- Coordinate thematic audits, improvement actions and management reporting.
- Work with Occupational Health on proportionate health surveillance where indicated.

9.7 District management teams / staff

Objective: Prevent cross-contamination through controlled receipt, cleaning, maintenance, testing, storage and issue of BA, face masks and specialist decontamination equipment.

Minimum requirements:

- Maintain dirty-to-clean workflows and prevent recontamination of cleaned equipment.
- Use approved cleaning systems, detergents and manufacturer instructions.
- Quarantine and transfer contaminated equipment in sealed or soluble bags or approved containers.
- Protect staff through suitable COSHH assessments, PPE/RPE, facilities, training and hygiene arrangements.
- Use approved digital or equipment records to capture receipt, cleaning, testing, defects and return to service. Responsibility for data entry and reporting must be defined locally.
- Coordinate with Training, Stores and Fleet on repeated-use equipment, replacement provision and safe transport.

9.8 Stores, Procurement and Approved Service Providers

Objective: Maintain a clean supply chain for PPE and equipment and protect those handling contaminated items.

Minimum requirements:

- Maintain physical segregation between contaminated and clean items during receipt, storage, transport and processing.
- Ensure contaminated items are sealed, labelled and routed to approved cleaning, inspection, repair, deep-cleaning or disposal arrangements.
- Maintain issue, collection, laundering, repair, disposal and replacement records using approved systems.
- Route structural firefighting tunics and leggings through the approved external cleaning provider; clean other items in-house only under approved procedures.
- Ensure soluble inner bags are provided where required by the approved process.
- Maintain available serviced pool stock and use approved ordering arrangements for other replacement items.
- Manage hazardous waste under the agreed contract and arrangements.
- Send heavily contaminated BA sets requiring specialist deep cleaning to the approved provider and arrange replacement equipment.
- Maintain approved decontamination and hygiene consumables for relevant stations and training venues.

9.9 Occupational Health

Objective: Support a proportionate occupational health response to contamination

risks.

Minimum requirements:

- Advise on health surveillance were indicated by risk assessment.
- Maintain clinical confidentiality and appropriate occupational health records.
- Provide referral, advice and signposting arrangements following reported exposure where required.

9.10 Workforce and Representative Body Engagement

Objective: Support practical implementation, trust and positive contamination-control behaviours.

Minimum requirements:

- Consult on this policy and significant supporting procedures.
- Use clear, consistent communications to reinforce professional hygiene and decontamination behaviours.
- Support stigma-free reporting of exposure concerns and defects.
- Use staff feedback to identify practical barriers and improvement opportunities.

10. INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

Relevant employees must receive information, instruction and training that is proportionate to their role and exposure. Induction, role-specific learning, practical instruction and refresher arrangements must be defined through the learning needs analysis and approved HFRS systems.

- Contaminant hazards and exposure pathways.
- Policy responsibilities and local procedures.
- PPE/RPE selection, fit, limitations, use and care.
- Zoning, decontamination, safe removal of PPE, hygiene, bagging and transport.
- Defect, exposure and incident reporting.
- Role-specific responsibilities for command, supervision, cleaning, stores, fleet, equipment, facilities and contracted services.

11. REPORTING AND RECORD KEEPING

Departments must identify the records required to demonstrate control and assurance. Records must be proportionate, accessible to authorised persons, retained in accordance with HFRS requirements and managed in line with data protection and confidentiality obligations.

- Relevant risk and COSHH assessments.
- Training and competence records.
- Equipment receipt, cleaning, servicing, testing, defects and return-to-service

records.
- PPE issue, collection, laundering, repair, disposal and replacement records.
- Exposure, contamination, defect and corrective-action records.
- Inspection, maintenance, sampling, audit and review records.
- Health surveillance records held through appropriate confidential arrangements.
- RPE fit test records.

12. MONITORING, AUDIT AND ASSURANCE

Assurance will focus on whether required controls are available, understood, used and effective. Measures must be approved before formal reporting begins and must use reliable data sources. Where data quality is limited, this must be stated rather than presenting an unsupported compliance figure.

Assurance area	Example evidence
Operational and training practice	Observation, exercise review, completed approved records, contamination-control availability and corrective actions.
Premises and fleet	Zoning, storage, ventilation/extraction, cleaning, maintenance and defect records.
PPE, BA and equipment	Tracking, cleaning, testing, servicing, replacement and quarantine records.
Learning and competence	Completion records, role-specific checks and observed practice.
Health and exposure	Anonymised trend information and approved exposure data where available and lawful.
Governance	Departmental arrangements, action plans, audit findings, decisions and management review.

Health and Safety will coordinate thematic assurance and report significant findings through the appropriate governance route. Departmental leads remain responsible for completing agreed actions and escalating barriers.

13. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

13.1 Implementation

Following approval, the policy owner will coordinate an implementation plan. The plan must identify the supporting documents requiring review, departmental arrangement owners, consultation activity, communications, training implications, resource requirements, dependencies, target dates and assurance measures.

13.2 Review

The policy will be reviewed 24 months after approval, or earlier where there is a significant incident, material change in legislation or guidance, new evidence, audit finding, operational learning or change to HFRS structures or equipment that affects the controls described.

14. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

14.1 HFRS documents to be confirmed before approval

- Equality Impact Assessment.
- Post-Fire Exposure Cleaning procedure or guidance and associated safe systems of work.
- COSHH procedure and relevant risk assessments.
- Biological decontamination guidance.
- PPE selection, care and maintenance policy.
- Respiratory protective equipment policy.
- Station and training venue hygiene, zoning and cleaning standards.
- Fleet and vehicle hygiene procedures.
- Exposure, defect and incident-reporting arrangements.
- Records retention and data protection requirements.

14.2 Legal and national references

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002, as amended.
- Equality Act 2010.
- NFCC Contaminants in Fire and Rescue Activities position statement and adopted supporting guidance.
- National Operational Guidance relevant to decontamination and health and safety.
- Health and Safety Executive COSHH guidance.
- FBU and University of Central Lancashire DECON guidance on minimising exposure to toxic fire effluents.
- Manufacturer instructions and approved technical standards applicable to PPE, RPE, BA and cleaning equipment.

If you require further guidance/information relating to this document, please contact the Corporate Assurance team.

APPENDIX A: DEPARTMENTAL CONTAMINANTS ARRANGEMENT TEMPLATE

Each department must complete and maintain the following information. The completed arrangement should be concise and refer to existing approved documents rather than duplicate detailed procedures.

Heading	Required content
Department and accountable lead	Department name, senior accountable owner and operational lead.
Activities and people in scope	Relevant tasks, locations, employees, contractors and service providers.
Contamination risks	Sources, exposure pathways, affected groups and links to risk/COSHH assessments.
Current mandatory controls	Controls already required and in operation, including responsibilities.
Interim controls	Temporary arrangements pending a permanent solution, with expiry or review date.
Improvement actions	Action, owner, target date, dependency, resource requirement and governance route.
Information and training	Role-specific requirements and records.
Equipment and facilities	PPE/RPE, hygiene, zoning, ventilation, storage, transport, cleaning and maintenance.
Records and reporting	Systems, data owner, retention and escalation.
Assurance	Inspections, observations, measures, audit and review frequency.
Consultation	Staff, representative bodies, networks and contractors consulted.
Approval and review	Approval date, approver, version and next review.

APPENDIX B: MINIMUM ASSURANCE MEASURES

- Departmental arrangement is approved, current and assigned to an accountable lead.
- Relevant risk and COSHH assessments are suitable, accessible and reviewed.
- Required controls, PPE/RPE, hygiene facilities and consumables are available and maintained.
- Staff understand their responsibilities and have completed required learning.
- Contaminated and clean items are segregated throughout handling, transport, cleaning and storage.
- Defects, failures and exposure events are recorded through approved routes and corrective action is tracked.
- Contracted providers meet specified cleaning, segregation, transport, record and notification requirements.
- Assurance findings and unresolved risks are escalated through the appropriate governance route