



HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Service Improvement

Exercise Policy

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Responsible Person	Head of Health, Safety, Environment and Organisational Learning
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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out how Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) utilise exercises to ensure a robust, safe, and risk-based response for the communities it serves. Exercises are systematically planned and risk-driven activities, intended to assess our personnel, systems, procedures, and plans against recognised hazards and risks.

Exercises will be conducted for the following (but not exclusive) purposes:

- Enhance preparedness for a broad range of emergency situations by providing realistic scenarios that develop operational competence and confidence.
- Demonstrate that the Service can respond safely, effectively and efficiently to emergencies and major accidents.
- Assure the continuity of critical services during disruption.
- Meet statutory and regulatory duties, including those under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015 (COMAH).
- Support continuous improvement, organisational learning and resilience across all functions.

Exercises will be risk-led and aligned to:

- Changes in the local risk landscape, emerging threats, and lessons identified from previous incidents, ensuring that our exercising programme remains current and targeted.
- The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and district/station risk profiles.
- Functional and business continuity risk assessments.
- Statutory and regulatory frameworks, including the Civil Contingencies Act and COMAH Regulations.
- Relevant national guidance and standards, such as National Operational Guidance (NOG), NFCC frameworks, COMAH exercising good practice and business continuity standards.
- The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and National Risk Register including critical infrastructure.

Core Code of Ethics

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (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 ensure 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 or marriage and civil partnership. It also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, employees and service users.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to operational and non-operational staff of HFRS who are required to plan, participate in, support, or evaluate exercises. It covers all exercise types and aims to ensure exercises are delivered safely, consistently, and in support of organisational learning and preparedness.

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Organisational Learning PDG
- Business Continuity Exercise PDG
- COMAH Exercise PDG
- Control Exercise PDG
- Cross Border Exercise PDG
- Emergency Response Exercise PDG
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Emergency Response and Recovery Guidance (Government)
- Exercise Best Practice (Government Guidance)
- National Operational Guidance
- Equality Impact Assessment

5. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

The goal is to establish a consistent, risk-led and proportionate framework for exercising that:

- Assesses HFRS capability and resilience spanning both operational and corporate areas, including COMAH and other major accident hazards.
- Confirms adherence to statutory and regulatory responsibilities.
- Promotes ongoing development, organisational learning and assurance.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy and supporting PDGs are to:

1. Set a clear exercise framework
2. Ensure appropriate coverage and frequency
3. Strengthen governance and assurance
4. Clarify the distinction between training and exercises
5. Support leadership, command, and BC competence

Desired Outcome

By implementing a coordinated, risk-based exercise programme, HFRS will be able to clearly evidence that it possesses skilled personnel, robust plans and resilient systems which:

- Deliver a safe, effective and efficient operational response,
- Safeguard the continuity of critical services during periods of disruption,
- Work confidently alongside partners, whether at COMAH sites or in response to other major incidents.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Exercising is essential to ensure both organisational compliance and individual competence: compliance is maintained through location- and asset-based exercises designed to test plans, procedures, and the effective use of operational resources at specific sites or risk-critical environments; competence is developed through individual-based participation, ensuring that all personnel—from Firefighter through to Chief Fire Officer (CFO)—maintain, demonstrate, and enhance the skills, knowledge, and decision-making required for their roles. To support these objectives, all personnel are required to take part in a minimum of one exercise per year, ensuring consistent exposure to realistic operational scenarios and reinforcing preparedness across all levels of the Service.

Exercise themes will generally adhere to the NOG training schedule set by the Learning and Development Section and tailored toward local risk factors. Functional exercises will be driven by risk assessment. Details about exercise frequency and scope are available in the related PDG.

The type of exercise determines the participants, resources, and venue, which are specified in figure 1. Figure 2 indicates the level of commander for each exercise.

Exercise type	Participants	HFRS Fire appliance Resources	Venue
Level 1	Full time Watch	3-4	Off-site
	On-Call	3-4	Off-site
	Contingency Crews	3-4	Off-site
Level 2	Service Wide	5-9	Off-site
Level 3	Service Wide	10+/Major Incident	Off-site
Business Continuity	Function/section	N/A	On-site

Cross Border	Full time Stations with cross border boundaries	1-3	Off-site
	On-Call Stations with cross border boundaries	1-3	Off-site
Control	Full time watch	N/A	On-site
COMAH	Service Wide	5-9	Off-site

Figure 1

Incident and Commander Framework																	
Incident Level	One				Two					Three							
Pumps	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
AM – L3																	
GM – L2 & L3																	
SM – L2																	
WM – L1																	
CM – L1																	
A/CM – L1																	

Legend	
Not within commander limitations	
Within limitations of commander	
Incident Commander with Monitoring Officer	
No expectation for an AM to be mobilised	

Figure 2

7. EXERCISE DEFINITION AND REQUIREMENTS

A fire and rescue service training exercise is a planned, structured, and risk-led activity conducted to test, validate, and assure the Service's arrangements for command, operational response, coordination, and resilience, in accordance with National Operational Guidance, NFCC frameworks, and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. These exercises are intended to assess the effectiveness of personnel, plans, procedures, and systems against identified risks and hazards, capture learning, and ensure the Service can respond safely, effectively, and collaboratively with partners to emergency and major incident scenarios. Exercises adhere to criteria set out within the relevant PDG for areas such as Emergency Response, Cross Border, Control, Business Continuity, or COMAH. Off-site exercises require external venues to hold a current, valid off-site risk assessment approved by Health, Safety & Environment and the Service's FBU safety representative, while activities on HFRS premises must be subject to an appropriate risk assessment specific to the exercise. When operational vehicles attend exercises, they must travel at normal road speeds, observing standard Traffic Regulations.

8. EXERCISE TYPE

There are two main types of exercise:

- Tabletop simulation or,
- Live scenario

The choice of which one to adopt depends on the purpose of the exercise. It is also dependent on lead-in time and available resources.

The exercise type, frequency, scope, level and specific requirements will be prescribed within the relevant PDG but will be in the form of either a tabletop or live scenario.

9. TABLETOP SIMULATION EXERCISES

Tabletop exercises are based on simulation; they involve a realistic scenario and a timeline, which may be real-time or expedited. Tabletops can be facilitated in a single room, in a series of linked rooms or via Teams which simulate the divisions between responders who need to communicate and be coordinated. Injects will be added to the simulation to stimulate a clear pathway to achieve the desired aims, objectives, and outcome for the simulation. The participants are expected to have access to the plan or proforma they are invited to test and have a basic understanding of the plan's implementation. This type of exercise is particularly useful for validation purposes, particularly for exploring planning assumptions.

10. LIVE SCENARIO EXERCISES

Live exercises range from a small-scale test of one component of the response, such as evacuation, ranging from a building or "incident" site to an affected community, through to a full-scale test of the whole organisation's response to an incident. Live exercises provide the best means of confirming the satisfactory operation of emergency communications, and the use of 'casualties' can add to the realism. Live exercises can also provide an opportunity of testing the crucial arrangements for handling the media.

11. EXERCISE THEMES

HFRS delivers a wide range of exercises designed to prepare staff and partners for both routine and exceptional incidents including:

- Emergency Response
- COMAH
- Cross Border
- Business Continuity
- Control

12. OTHER AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS

Involving multi-agency partners in exercises helps apply JESIP principles: co-location, communication, coordination, shared risk understanding, and situational awareness; preparing responders to collaborate effectively. Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, both Category 1 (emergency services, local authorities) and Category 2 (utility companies, transport operators) responders should participate and share information. This ensures a coordinated and thorough approach to emergency preparedness.

13. PREMISES AND RISK ASSESSMENT

All operational exercises must be held away from HFRS sites., Only BC, Control, and specialist services permitted on HFRS premises. Exercise Coordinators are responsible for selecting an appropriate location and should communicate directly with the building's occupier and HFRS trade union representatives to evaluate site suitability. It is necessary to ensure that the chosen site meets the exercise goals while maintaining realism and safety, and any 'no-go' zones or restrictions must be clearly outlined to safeguard property, occupants and the participants.

Participants in the exercise should be clearly identified, and key details, such as staff involvement, evacuation procedures, and use of water or cosmetic smoke, must be clarified. An **off-site risk assessment** (OSRA) should be conducted to determine hazards and necessary controls. If site personnel are involved, a joint risk assessment may be required.

14. HEALTH AND SAFETY BRIEF

All participants must attend a safety briefing before the exercise. Clear written instructions should be distributed in advance and kept accessible for reference. The verbal safety brief should address essential points and allow time for questions. Following these steps ensures everyone understands their roles, safety measures, and emergency procedures for effective training.

- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Specify duties of monitoring and safety officers, including oversight and intervention when necessary.
- **Communication Protocols:** Detail communication methods, channels, call signs, and escalation procedures for concerns or incidents.
- **Identification of Key Personnel:** Explain how monitoring officers, safety officers, and observers will be identified (e.g., coloured tabards or vests).
- **Emergency Procedures:** Outline emergency actions, assembly points, evacuation routes, and ways to summon help.
- **Hazards and Controls:** Note specific risks, control measures, and any required PPE.
- **First Aid Arrangements:** State first aid kit locations and identify designated first aiders.
- **Site-Specific Details:** Provide information on site restrictions, available facilities, and welfare break arrangements.

15. RECORDING AND DATA

All exercise coordination and completion are required to be documented on the **Exercise Hub** for assurance, governance, and oversight purposes. A debrief report must be submitted via the **Assurance and Monitoring System** (AMS) after each exercise to record learnings, best practices, and areas for enhancement. Further to this, all exercises must be recorded on PDR PRO locally by attending crews / personnel, within the prescribed Exercising Area. Adhering to this process ensures outcomes are systematically captured, monitored, and evaluated, allowing the Service to identify development opportunities and support ongoing improvement.

**If anyone requires further guidance / information regarding this document,
please contact the organisational learning team**