DEPARTMENT OF
THE ENVIRONMENT
AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

Review of Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland

FINAL REPORT

FARRELL GRANT
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CONSULTING

JANUARY 2002

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Minister for the Environment and Local Government
Custom House
Dublin 1

24 January 2002

Dear Minister,

Fire Safety and Fire Services Review

Introduction

We are pleased to present to you our final report on the Review of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland which you commissioned. This has been an onerous and challenging review process, involving widespread stakeholder and public consultation and participation, which has now, we believe, been brought to a successful conclusion. In presenting this report on its outcomes to you, there are a number of key issues which we would like to emphasise. These are addressed very briefly below under appropriate headings and are dealt with in more detail in the Report itself.

Presenting the Review Findings

Given the subject matter for the Review, there will be an understandable concern about raising public fears and / or creating unnecessary anxieties. We hope that it will be possible to highlight and deal with deficiencies in the current regime without causing unnecessary fear or panic in the public arena. Our views in this regard are:

- We did not uncover anything in our review of the current arrangements which would cause us to say that there is immediate unacceptable risk to the public.
- There are many areas, however, where improvements for the future need to be introduced, many of which are fundamental and of a breakthrough nature in terms of proposed movement away from the current arrangements.
- Given that it is over 25 years since the regime was last reviewed, it should not, we believe, come as a surprise to anyone (and certainly not to the key stakeholders) that major change now needs to be implemented. The whole landscape of public administration and service delivery (at central and local Government levels) has changed hugely as has the demographic, economic and social profile of the country since the current arrangements were put in place.

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- The current arrangements were not designed to deal with today's circumstances and it would be unfair to gratuitously criticise them for being unable to do so.
- You, as Minister, and the Government, had, we believe, already recognised that problems existed and that action was required. This was evidenced in recent years by the increased capital spending on fire stations and appliances and by increased fees to fund additional fire safety activity.
- The commissioning of this Review is, we believe, further evidence of a commitment on your part to identifying what needs to be done and to setting about the task of improving matters for the future.

A Positive Outcome

Our report, we believe, represents a very positive outcome from the review process for the key stakeholders involved and for the public who are dependent on the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime for effective protection and for the delivery of speedy and efficient emergency response services.

While, inevitably, there will be those who will want to concentrate on negative aspects from the past, the critical issue for us is the vision for the future.

If our recommendations are adopted and implemented we believe that those working within the regime will have better and more rewarding careers and that those who are served by the regime will be in receipt of world-class services. Specifically, we have set out to design a regime for the future which will:

- Reduce the incidence of fires.
- Reduce deaths, injuries and other losses from fire-related incidents.
- Reduce the economic and social cost of fires.
- Make better use of available resources.
- Increase customer satisfaction with the services provided.

The Core Recommendations

This was a very wide-ranging and comprehensive review. There is, therefore, a large array of issues dealt with in our Report both in reviewing and analysing the current arrangements and in developing recommendations for the future.

At the core, however, of the Review outcome is our recommendation for a new structural and organisational model at national and local levels for the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime. The model recommended by us is a significant departure from, and improvement on, the current model.



The key features of the new model recommended by us are:

- A new Authority at national level which will provide stronger national leadership, put in place a more integrated and coherent structure at the centre and which will lead, develop, implement and manage the performance of a new regime aimed at delivering better results.
- New arrangements at Local Authority level which will integrate existing Fire Authorities and Building Control Authorities into a unified structure providing better career opportunities for staff and delivering (and being accountable for) new and improved services to customers.
- A more focused and enhanced emphasis on Prevention and Mitigation as well as on operational emergency response capability.

The structural and organisational recommendations in our Report are the most critical in that they will provide, if implemented, the framework within which necessary fundamental change can take place.

Democratic Balance

We have developed the model for the future such that the democratic balance between central and local government is maintained under the new structural and organisational arrangements proposed. Local service delivery will remain a key value.

However, the relationships between the new National Authority and the Local Authorities will have to evolve in a manner which will ensure necessary accountability for performance and service delivery. Inherent in this concept will be the need for minimum standards to be set, maintained and audited for compliance, since this is a critical consideration in the discharge of public safety functions.

Cost

We believe that the recommendations in this Report can be implemented, on a phased basis, without placing unrealistic additional financial burdens on the Exchequer or on the public. The Report sets out our views on how this can be achieved.

Implementation

The process by which this Review was conducted was an important consideration throughout. There was extensive involvement of, and input by, the key stakeholders. Much time was spent building consensus around key issues. There is, as a result, now a significant positive momentum for change and for implementation amongst most of the key parties. We believe that it will be important not to allow that positive momentum to be dissipated.

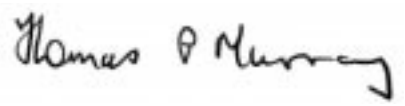
Conclusion

There are many people who must be thanked by us for their cooperation with and participation in this review process. They are too numerous to mention here and, accordingly, their contribution is acknowledged in the Report itself.

We wish you and those charged with implementation every success with the challenging but rewarding task which lies ahead in putting the new arrangements in place.

Should you wish to discuss any aspects of our Report, having had a chance to absorb its contents, we will, of course, be only happy to oblige.

Yours sincerely,



TOM MURRAY
Partner

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0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Preface

0.1 The purpose of this Executive Summary is to set out briefly the main findings, conclusions and recommendations in our report on the Strategic Review of Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland. It follows the sequence of the Sections in the report itself. This Review was an extremely thorough and detailed review, over a 6 month period, of all aspects of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland. It involved an extensive process of consultation with all stakeholders, including members of the public, as well as benefiting from inputs from international experts and from global best practice benchmarking.

0.2 Given the lengthy and very detailed work programme involved, including a number of overseas visits, the extensive research undertaken, the large number of submissions received and the sheer volume of information and data collected, the report itself is, in fact, only a summary of the total process which underpinned the Review. This brief Executive Summary should, therefore, ideally not be read as, nor regarded as, a substitute for the analysis and argumentation in the report itself. It seeks merely to highlight a small range of the issues addressed in the Review for purposes of convenience.

0.3 As pointed out, the Review process benefited from extensive consultation with, and inputs from, a wide spectrum of interests. These included:

- Members of the public who made submissions to us or who attended seven regional public consultation fora.
- A large array of interest groups who made submissions to us and/or who were interviewed by us.
- Fire Service personnel at all levels in a large number of Local Authorities.
- The Review Advisory Group which oversaw the Review process and which comprised officials of the Department of the Environment and Local Government, representatives of Local Authority management, Ministerial nominees, representatives of Fire Services management, Fire Service staff at all levels and two eminent international experts (one from the UK and one from Holland).
- Chief Fire Officers and representatives of other management grades in the Fire Service.
- The various statutory bodies involved in the delivery of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime.
- Union officials and representatives of fire-fighting staff in the full-time and retained brigades.
- Officials of the DoELG and Local Authorities involved in the planning, development, management and oversight of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime.
- In addition to our own core management consultancy team, two specialist international consultancy firms, one specialising in standards of fire cover and one specialising in major emergency planning and management were engaged in developing the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained in our report.

0.4 With such widespread inputs and consultation there was, as might be expected, a wide variety and spectrum of views and opinions on the issues to be addressed and on the options for dealing with them. However, we encountered a high degree of consensus across the board on a number of key points as follows:

- There are many positive features of the current Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland and much improvement has been brought about since the last major review in 1975 and the Stardust Tribunal report in 1982.
- However, international best practice has moved on in the intervening period and there are, notwithstanding the foregoing point, a wide range of areas where further improvement is now necessary in order to update and modernise the regime.
- In a number of key areas, particularly in relation to the number of fire deaths in domestic dwellings and the per capita spend on Fire Safety and Fire Services, Ireland lags behind in terms of international trends and comparisons.
- With the passage of time since the last review, and having regard to vastly changed circumstances since the core features of the current regime were put in place, fundamental structural, organisational, funding, operational and process change is now needed in order to position the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime to bring about reductions in fire deaths, loss and damage from fire as well as in improving the capacity to respond to a wide variety of non-fire emergency situations.
- Government had already identified the need for action through increased capital spending over the last few years. The commissioning of this Review is further evidence of its commitment to developing and modernising the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland in other areas as well.

Section 1 - Introduction

0.5 Section 1 of the report sets out the background to the Review, the Terms of Reference for its conduct and describes the process by which the Review was conducted. It identifies, in detail, the inputs and consultation processes involved which have been briefly referred to above.

Section 2 – The Current Regime

0.6 Section 2 describes the current regime in Ireland for Fire Safety and Fire Services. It identifies how the regime has evolved over time. It describes the role and functions of all the key parties. In particular, it draws attention to the wide range of functions involved, with a particular emphasis on new functions which have accrued over time, and which now heavily outweigh responding to fire calls as the main activities and taskings of the Fire Service.

Section 3 – International Comparisons

0.7 Section 3 sets out the results of our research into international comparators. It highlights the difficulties involved in making such comparisons because of the lack of reliable statistical data and the absence of any systematic research and development function in the Irish regime. However, it points out that in relation to a number of key trends e.g. fire deaths and per capita spend on Fire Safety and Fire Services, Ireland is somewhat lagging behind.

Section 4 – Analysis of the Current Arrangements

0.8 Section 4 sets out our detailed findings and conclusions in relation to the current arrangements. It does so under three broad headings as follows:

- Firstly, it acknowledges the many positive features of the current regime.
- Secondly, it draws attention to a number of overarching strategic problems which remain to be addressed.
- Thirdly, in accordance with our Terms of Reference, it sets out our findings and conclusions under a relatively large number of headings covering all those aspects of the current regime which we were specifically directed to review and report upon.

0.9 In acknowledging the many positive features of the current regime, particular attention is drawn to the following key points:

- Increased capital spending by Government is tackling the infrastructure problems in relation to fire stations, the appliance fleet and other equipment.
- Ireland has a relatively good record in relation to major fire incidents in multiple occupancy buildings leading to multiple fire deaths/casualties.
- The Fire Service has a large number of professional and committed personnel at all levels.
- There is no ostensible reason why unnecessary public alarm or concern should be raised in relation to fire cover and emergency fire response capability.
- A massive increase in fire and non-fire emergency calls is, by and large, being responded to and as far as we can ascertain, being handled in a satisfactory manner.
- The building control system (for fire safety purposes) has been in place since 1992 and the licensing enforcement regime is being improved, *albeit* at the expense of other forms of fire prevention activity.

0.10 The main overarching strategic problems which require to be addressed are identified as including:

- The extent to which the diffusion of authority, responsibility and accountability across a wide number of statutory agencies and within DoELG and Local Authorities does not provide the integrated structures and strong national leadership which the regime now requires.

- The fact that our approach to the determination of fire cover standards has been overtaken by best practice models which now follow a risk-based approach.
- The need for further development of the Major Emergency Management regime particularly in relation to scenario planning, in improving mitigation as well as response capacity, in the structures and the processes for dealing with major incidents, which by definition will overwhelm local capacity and will, in our view, require a regional or national scale response and in developing expert competencies and specialist coordination arrangements at national level.
- The low morale within the Service which points to the need to advance the developmental HR agenda and to overcome restrictive practices and the other negative imparts of an historically fraught and adversarial industrial relations regime.
- The need to change, strengthen and improve structures at all levels and to overcome barriers to promotion and career advancement inherent in the current two-tier entry system. There is also a need for greater emphasis on health and safety for Fire-fighters, and on competencies, training and equality issues.
- The variability of service provision from one Local Authority to another, from emergency response to the different level of involvement and practices adopted in relation to fire prevention, building control and licensing enforcement. The variability of standards involved, which is compounded by the absence of performance management or quality auditing, is not appropriate in the field of public safety.

0.11 The findings and conclusions arising from the specific aspects which we were directed to review and report upon under our Terms of Reference are too numerous to outline in this Executive Summary. In many respects the issues which arise are, in any event, mainly symptomatic of the more fundamental causal factors set out above. However, the following points are indicative of the issues identified:

- Gaps and weaknesses in the legislative frameworks.
- Difficulties in maintaining the retained service unless more flexible arrangements are put in place.
- Gaps in training provision.
- The need for further improvements in infrastructure (stations, appliance fleet, equipment).
- The degree to which the voluntary sector is not sufficiently integrated within the statutory regime and is not, therefore, sufficiently leveraged.
- The extent to which potential for increasing effectiveness and / or realising savings are not being fully exploited e.g. in relation to Section 59 agreements, in providing more services on a regional basis and in greater utilisation of information technology.

Section 5 – Recommendations

0.12 Section 5 sets out our recommendations for further enhancing the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime to deal with the areas where improvement is necessary as set out in Section 4. We take the view in Section 5 of the report that the primary focus needs to be on putting in place a robust framework which will enable the major change agenda now required to be definitively tackled.

0.13 We also point out in Section 5 that the fact that a fundamental overhaul of the regime is now necessary is perhaps understandable given the length of time since it was last reviewed. The nature and extent of the change programme now needed should not, in our view, be used to level unfair and unjust criticism nor should it be exploited to raise unnecessary public alarm or concern.

0.14 Our primary recommendation is that a new National Authority for Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services be established. We believe that the new Authority should be brought into being through integrating and amalgamating into a single structure the functions currently discharged by:

- The Fire and Emergency Planning Section of DoELG.
- The Fire Advisory Service of DoELG.
- The Fire Services Council.
- The National Safety Council (fire safety promotion and awareness).
- The Construction Section of the DoELG in relation to building control (the Construction Section of the DoELG will remain responsible for the ongoing development and upgrading of Building Regulations / Standards and related Technical Guidance Documents in consultation with the Building Regulations Advisory Body (BRAB)).

0.15 We believe strongly that a single unified structure under the new Authority is the optimum means of achieving coherent national leadership and development for the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime.

0.16 We also recommend that it would be more rational for Government to transfer to the new Authority certain functions which currently reside elsewhere in the administrative structures of the State. These include:

- Civil Defence.
- Inland Waterways Search and Rescue.
- Mountain and Cave Search and Rescue.
- The Local Authority Lifeguard Service.

It seems to us that these functions have more affinity with the core functions proposed for the new Authority. In addition, if our recommendations in this regard are accepted, we believe that they will provide for better integration and leverage of the voluntary sector, which we believe can make a significant and valuable contribution in terms of community self protection.

0.17 We recommend new structures for the Authority based on a Board and an Advisory Council and a staffing structure consisting of four directorates (Operations, Safety Programmes, Major Emergency Management and Corporate Services) headed by a Chief Executive and with a total of 45 staff.

0.18 We recommend new structures at Local Authority level also which mirror the arrangements now proposed at national level. This will involve bringing existing Local Authority Fire Services and Building Control functions together, with those referred to at 0.16 above, into a single structure at local level.

0.19 We make a large number of other more detailed recommendations, the key features of which include:

- The adoption of a new risk-based approach to the determination of fire cover standards.
- New approaches, processes and structures for Major Emergency Management.
- More concentration and investment in prevention / mitigation including the implementation of Community Fire Safety programmes and the harnessing of Fire-fighters as front line ambassadors of the safety message.
- Better enforcement of building control regulations and of licensing (including During Performance Inspections).
- The introduction of a competency-based approach to recruitment, retention and career progression including the removal of barriers to promotion inherent in the current two-tier entry system.
- Greater flexibility in the deployment and tasking of staff at all levels.
- An enhanced training regime.
- Continued capital investment to improve infrastructure.
- More use of Section 59 agreements and more rationalisation and better coordination at regional level.
- A range of measures to enhance the retained Fire Service.
- More emphasis on implementation of health, safety and welfare at work initiatives and equality.

0.20 Despite the extent of our recommendations and the fundamental change programme involved, we believe that the outcome of the Review can be implemented within an affordable cost envelope. Our key recommendations on funding are that:

- The increased capital investment programme be maintained at current levels and be reviewed on a three-year cyclical basis as infrastructure and equipment are brought up to standard.
- The increased focus on prevention, mitigation and enforcement be achieved on a self-financing basis based on revenues from sectors which benefit.
- The significant immediate additional cost which will arise will be in relation to the staffing costs of establishing the new National Authority which we estimate at about IR£2m / 2.54m to IR£3m / 3.81m per annum.
- The insurance industry be required to make a greater contribution to costs.
- The abolition of incident-related charges (other than nuisance deterrent charges) which contribute relatively little to overall costs and which are difficult to levy and difficult to collect.

Section 6 – Implementation

0.21 Section 6 sets out our views on implementation. In essence, we recommend that the Minister, following consideration of our report, and if he is in agreement, announce his acceptance of the main thrust of the findings, conclusions and recommendations and his intention to establish the new Authority as a first step towards change. We then recommend the implementation structure which should be put in place and the process needed for developing a detailed, phased implementation plan.

Some Key Facts about the Irish Fire Service

- Each Local Authority is charged with the duty of providing a Fire Service in their functional area, under the Fire Services Act, 1981.
- The Fire Service is part of the Local Authority system and is delivered as part of Programme Group 5 - Environmental Protection and absorbs 50 *per cent* of the cost of the Environmental Protection Budget on average in Local Authorities.
- While the day to day operations of the Fire Service is under the direction of the Chief Fire Officer in a Local Authority, ultimately the County Manager or his/her delegate is by definition responsible for the provision of Fire Protection Services in the Authority's functional area.
- Most of the functions in relation to the Fire Service in the Local Authority are executive functions and are the responsibility of the Manager of the Authority with the exception of Preparation of Fire and Operations Plan, known as the Section 26 Plan, which is a reserved function and is a matter for the Council as a whole *i.e.* locally elected politicians.
- The Department of Environment and Local Government has an 'advisory' role and as such does not have the authority to inspect Local Authority Fire Services or impose Performance Standards for the Fire Service on the Local Authorities.
- Fire services in Ireland are delivered by full-time brigades in the large urban areas and retained (or part-time brigade) in the rest of the country.
- Recruitment to the Fire Service is at two levels i.e. as a recruit Fire-fighter or to the lower levels of Senior Officer grades. Under current arrangements, only graduates in engineering (or architecture) can progress to the level of Chief Fire Officer.
- Training of Fire Service personnel is the responsibility of the individual Fire Authorities. They are assisted in this by the FSC, which organises training for Officers.
- The DoELG provides capital funding for fire stations, appliance fleet and equipment as well as mobilisation / communication equipment.
- The NSC is the statutory body responsible for the promotion of fire safety awareness. Individual Fire Authorities are empowered to give advice on public safety under the Fire Services Act, 1981.

1. INTRODUCTION

Terms of Reference

1.1 The Request for Proposals for the Review of Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland, consisting of the Terms of Reference, are set out in Appendix A. From the outset of the Review process, we were left in no doubt as to the importance which the Department of Environment and Local Government (DoELG) and the Review Advisory Group (see 1.15 below) attached to the Review. We also recognised from the extent of our brief that, while the principle of local service delivery was to be maintained, this was to be a root and branch Review in which all elements of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland were to be considered.

1.2 The Terms of Reference for the Review impressed upon us the broad nature of the stakeholder community that required to be consulted as part of the Review process. While the overwhelming majority of these stakeholders welcomed the Review it must be acknowledged that the Review was a DoELG initiative, and therefore it is the Minister to whom our report is addressed. We fully recognise and appreciate, however, that the Department consulted with, and obtained the cooperation of, key internal and external stakeholders prior to the commencement of the Review process.

Background to the Review

1.3 While the Oireachtas established two fire-related Tribunals of Inquiry in 1979 and 1981, the most recent Review of Fire Services in Ireland was the Report to the Minister for Local Government which was completed in 1975. However, it is generally accepted that the structure of the present Fire Safety and Fire Services regime has its origins in the conclusions of an Inter-Departmental Committee which reported in 1945.

1.4 Notwithstanding that it has been sometime since a comprehensive Review of Fire Safety and Fire Services was undertaken, there are a number of key features of the background to the present Review which have emerged during the intervening period:

- The Fire Services Act, 1981 is the primary legislation governing fire safety and the provision of Fire Services in Ireland.
- A new model for organising mobilisation and communications on a regional basis – the CAMP project - has been introduced.
- The Fire Services Council (FSC) has been established and, while having a much wider remit, primarily assists with training within the service.
- In 1987 the National Safety Council (NSC) was established to promote fire safety awareness through education, training programmes and publicity campaigns as an integral part of its wider remit.
- Fire Services throughout the country perform an increasing number of emergency roles with road traffic accidents, hazardous materials and other specialist rescue roles becoming increasingly important.

- The Fire Safety regime has changed significantly following the introduction of the Building Control Act, 1990 which facilitated the subsequent development of the current Fire Safety Certificate system.
- Recruitment and retention of staff in some areas is increasingly difficult particularly in relation to retained (part-time) fire personnel.
- The cost of service provision has increased significantly and is *generally* between 3 *per cent* and 8 *per cent* of Local Authority revenue budgets, depending primarily on the staffing arrangements.
- Most Fire Authorities concentrate their fire safety resources on the operation of the Fire Safety Certificate system, which has experienced enormous growth in line with the recent strength of the construction industry in Ireland, at the expense of the more general education and enforcement roles in fire safety associated with the Fire Services Act, 1981.
- Ireland has experienced well documented significant social and economic change during the last decade which has resulted in many changes, including in demographics and societal expectations of public services, all of which have an impact on the future shape of an appropriate regime for Fire Safety and Fire Services.

1.5 All of the above issues are considered further in subsequent sections. It should be recognised at this point, however, that the Review was taking place against a background of significant change and the emergence of key challenges all of which have occurred since the last time the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime was comprehensively reviewed.

Methodology

1.6 We conducted the Review in a systematic way which was comprehensive and inclusive. There were three main phases of work as follows:

- **Phase 1** consisted of an overall environmental analysis aimed at establishing relevant trends and issues as well as a range of views on the overall functioning and performance of Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland.

- **Phase 2** involved a deeper analysis of the capability of the current regime under the headings as set out in our Terms of Reference.

- **Phase 3** focused on the development of actions and recommendations to address the deficiencies identified through our analysis with an emphasis on solutions which we believe should now form part of an effective performance management regime to underpin the future of the Service.

1.7 Most of the detailed work was undertaken in the period mid-June to mid-October. During this period, we sought input from recognised international experts in relation to two specific issues. OCTO assisted us with our assessment of the role of Fire Services in Major Emergency Management, while ENTEC provided expert input in relation to standards of fire cover. Brief profiles of both companies are included in Appendix B. During this time, we also circulated a Questionnaire to all 37 Fire Authorities. A fourth and final stage of work involved the collation of our primary and secondary research and analysis to enable the production and presentation of this report on our findings, conclusions and recommendations. Throughout the process, regular project team meetings were held with the Department's Project Team to provide status reports and to discuss key issues as they arose. We would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the Project Team for their advice and assistance throughout the process.

1.8 In recognition of the importance, and perhaps even the emotiveness, of the issue of Fire Safety and Fire Services, inclusivity was central to our approach to the Review. We held in excess of 160 meetings and consultations, details of which are included in Appendix C. This includes meetings with officials of the DoELG, officials of a range of other Government Departments, Local Authority officials, Fire Service personnel, Fire Service personnel representative organisations, victims' relatives, relevant statutory bodies, representatives of industry and a wide variety of other stakeholders including victims, members of the general public and political bodies / interests. We are deeply grateful for the cooperation we received from all parties.

1.9 Following our appointment to conduct the Review, we placed an advertisement in a number of national newspapers inviting submissions from interested parties. This advertising was supported by the creation of a website (http://www.fgs.ie/fireservices.html) specifically for the Review which included our Terms of Reference, contact details and e-mail feedback facilities. To further enhance engagement with the Review process, and to supplement the advertising process, we wrote directly to over 40 key stakeholders requesting a submission. In total, 94 bodies / individuals made submissions, the details of which are included in Appendix D. It should be noted that we received a vast amount of supplemental material for consideration in relation to many of these submissions. In addition, we attended a number of other events including the fourth biennial SIPTU-FBU Conference and the Institute of Fire Engineers Annual Conference.

1.10 From the outset of the Review process, we recognised the huge public interest in the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime. In August and September, as part of the consultation process, and in addition to the invitations for written submissions, seven regional fora were held throughout Ireland, in Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Galway, Athlone, Sligo and Kilkenny. Notices of the consultation sessions were placed in the national daily newspapers, in the Irish language papers and press releases were circulated to the regional papers (a copy of the advertisement is included in Appendix E). Over 200 representative bodies and stakeholder interests were invited to extend an invitation to attend to their wider memberships. The purpose of the regional consultation sessions was to ensure that the Review was informed by the broadest possible input from organisations, groups and individuals who have in the past or who, in the future, are likely to interact in any capacity with the Fire Service. To facilitate this discussion, workshops on "Safety" and "Responding to Emergencies" were hosted at each of the consultations. Attendees were also invited to forward submissions or to contact the Farrell Grant Sparks (FGS) Project Team directly to discuss any issues outstanding at the end of each session.

1.11 In total, 319 people participated in the consultation process nationwide. The following is a broad categorisation of the groups in attendance:

- Fire Service and Local Authority Personnel;
- Volunteer Services;
- Construction, Tourism, Forestry and Health & Safety Sectors;
- Representatives of Disability, Elderly, Youth, Homeless, Disadvantaged, Educational and Sporting Organisations;
- Interested Individuals.

1.12 The Review Advisory Group (see 1.15 below) included Fire Services experts from the Netherlands and the UK. We were kindly invited by both parties to examine the arrangements in their respective countries to further inform the Review process and supplement our analysis of international models. Both visits were invaluable and greatly increased our understanding, and knowledge, of alternative approaches to a number of issues being addressed in the Review. We cannot overstate our appreciation of the time and attention afforded to us during both visits, particularly in view of their occurrence immediately after the events of September 11th in the USA.

1.13 In the course of the Review, we reviewed a vast amount of written documentation in addition to the many submissions received. National and international Government reports, research papers, media material, on-line information, theses and legislation are some of the types of written information reviewed. Appendix F contains a full list of all documentation reviewed.

Review Advisory Group

1.14 Prior to our engagement as Consultants, the DoELG had established a Review Advisory Group (RAG) to assist in overseeing the Review process. The RAG consisted of representatives of the DoELG, the Department of Finance, County and City Managers Association, Chief Fire Officers Association, IMPACT, SIPTU, two ministerial appointees and two international experts. Details of the membership of RAG are included in Appendix G.

The role of the RAG was defined as follows:

- To support the Review process;
- To ensure that appropriate consultation takes place and that appropriate contribution is made from all relevant sectors;
- To review the Consultant's draft report, and provide feedback.

1.15 We met with the RAG a total of six times at key milestones throughout the process including the initiation of the Review, the end of each phase and to receive feedback on the draft report. In general, these meetings consisted of a status report followed by an interactive workshop / discussion forum. We are indebted to all of the members of the RAG for their cooperation, participation and enthusiasm. In particular, we are grateful for the commitment of the international experts Mr Brian Robinson and Mr René Husmann throughout the process and to the chair of the RAG, Mr Tony Boland, for his assistance during the process.

Conclusion

1.16 We recognised from the outset that the Review process would be demanding and challenging. While we are confident that our approach and methodology enabled us to meet these demands and challenges, it was dependent on, and the production of this report would not have been possible without, the cooperation and assistance of Departmental officials, Local Authority personnel, Fire Services personnel, staff representatives, technical experts and the general public. We would like to avail of this opportunity to thank all of them for their vital contributions.

1.17 Finally, we would like to thank the DoELG for appointing us to conduct the Strategic Review of Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland. The review, analysis and recommendations contained in the subsequent sections of this report comprise an opportunity for Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland to be developed and enhanced in a manner consistent with both international best practice in the provision of such services and national developments in public service delivery.

2. DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT SITUATION

History of the Irish Fire Service - Introduction

2.1 Fire Services have existed in various forms in Ireland for centuries. One of the earliest known references to Fire-fighters is in a manuscript relating to the monastic town of Clonmacnoise in the tenth century. Fire Services, as we know them today, started to develop with fire brigades run by insurance companies in the nineteenth century. These developed into municipal brigades, provided by Corporations and Borough Councils towards the end of the 19th century.

2.2 The Fire Brigades Act, 1940 was the basis for the first countrywide fire-fighting system. It made it mandatory for sanitary authorities, urban and rural, to make reasonable provision for the prompt and efficient extinguishing of fires in their areas and for the protection and rescue of persons and property from injury by fire. In doing this, they were to take account of all relevant considerations, including their financial resources.

2.3 A sanitary authority could discharge this duty either by maintaining a fire brigade (in which case it became a fire brigade authority) or by arranging with another sanitary authority (or with persons) to maintain a fire brigade to cover its district.

2.4 The then Minister for Local Government was empowered to inquire, on complaint, into the adequacy of the provision made by a Local Authority and could, in certain circumstances, require Local Authorities to co-operate in the provision of a Fire Service.

2.5 Modern legislation in the form of the Fire Services Act, 1981 established the Fire Authorities and made provision for the organisation of the Fire Service, training of fire personnel, fire-fighting and fire safety functions, and other matters relating to the protection of people and property from fire.

Other Reviews of the Fire Service

2.6 The most recent comprehensive review of Fire Services in Ireland was the "Report to the Minister for Local Government" prepared by a Working Party on the Fire Service, which was completed in 1975. The Oireachtas also established two fire-related Tribunals of Inquiry in 1979 and 1981 following the Whiddy Island Disaster (8 January 1979) and the Stardust Fire (14 February 1981). The Terms of Reference of these Tribunals, however, did not provide for general reviews of the Fire Service.

2.7 Prior to the 1975 Review, the Service had not been reviewed in thirty years. In November 1943, an Inter-departmental Committee was appointed to review the Service. It reported in 1945 and many aspects of the current regime stem from the conclusions of that Review. In fact, the core structure of the regime now under review dates from that time.

More Recent History

2.8 Over the last two decades, the Fire Services have made significant advances in implementing the accepted recommendations of both the 1975 Review Report and the Stardust Tribunal. There has been capital investment in the region of IR£125m / €158.72m, resulting in over 115 new or refurbished fire stations, some 400 'new'[1] fire appliances, together with specialist equipment and new radio / mobilisation facilities (the CAMP Project (s)), which have been developed on a shared / regional basis.

2.9 The Fire Services Council (FSC), the national body established by the Minister in the early 1980s, has contributed significantly to the service *via* its annual programmes of officer training. A number of initiatives have been negotiated with staffing interests *via* the Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB), the body which co-ordinates the local authorities IR / HR policy, such as occupational health systems, Senior Officer rostering *etc.*

2.10 The National Safety Council (NSC) was established in 1987 and is the statutory body charged with promoting fire safety awareness through education, training programmes and publicity campaigns.

2.11 The range of emergency response roles undertaken by Fire Services has expanded over the period, with road traffic accidents, hazardous materials, rescue (including water rescue) and other special services responses to calls becoming increasingly important.

2.12 The area of fire safety has also changed significantly, with the recruitment of additional graduates to work in fire prevention / safety in the post-Stardust years. A programme of preparation and publication of safety guidance material for 'persons in control' of different categories of buildings has been in place since the late 1980s. The Building Control Act of 1990 facilitated the introduction of, and provided for, the "Fire Safety Certificate" system in 1992. Fire safety services are also involved in implementing a range of other safety-related legislation, the most important of which are outlined in the next section.

1 *A number of fire appliances were bought second hand from the UK*

Legislation – An Overview

2.13 The Fire Services Act, 1981 is the main legislative and statutory basis for Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland. The 1981 Act implemented many of the recommendations of the 1975 Review. Although the legislative process had already commenced, the impetus for the passing into law of the Act was the Stardust Fire which occurred on the 14th February, 1981 and resulted in 48 fatalities[2].

2.14 Obligations on Fire Authorities and their staff are also found under a number of other Acts of which the following are the most important:

- Building Control Act, 1990
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989
- Dangerous Substances Act, 1972
- Local Government Planning and Development Acts, 1963 - 2000
- Dance Halls Act, 1935 and 1977
- Registration of Clubs Acts, 1904 and 1981
- Explosives Act, 1875
- Licensing Acts, 1833 and 1988

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[2] *It should be noted, that the Fire Service Act was enacted prior to the publication of the Stardust Tribunal report. The Tribunal reported in June 1982 and made recommendations for the improvement of Dublin Fire Brigade. Whilst the remit of the Stardust Tribunal did not include a review of national arrangements for Fire Services, many recommendations of the Tribunal had implications for the provision of Fire Services nationally.*

The key recommendations which had implications for the Fire Service as a whole were:

i) The Minister of the Environment should have overall central responsibility for the fire-fighting and Fire Prevention Services provided by the Local Authorities.

ii) The Minister should establish an Inspectorate for the Fire Service with three distinct areas of responsibility:
- *Supervision of all fire-fighting services in the country.*
- *Supervision of fire prevention and fire protection measures in the State.*
- *Establish and maintain a National Training Centre for fire personnel.*

iii) The Inspectorate should prescribe Standards of Fire Cover to be provided by all Local Authorities.

iv) Building Regulations should be implemented as a matter of urgency.

v) The two-tier system should be retained, Junior Fire Officers should have the facilities to be trained and educated to third level qualifications to be able to apply for the post of Chief Fire Officer.

vi) A new Control Centre with a Computer Aid Mobilisation System should be established in Dublin.

vii) The Chief Fire Officer in Dublin should have direct reporting relations with the Assistant City Manager.

Recommendations Nos. IV and V (partially), VI and VII respectively have been implemented to date. Decisions were made by subsequent Governments not to implement the remainder.

2.15 Appendix H provides a more detailed description of the other legislation (and related regulations) impacting on the Fire Service.

Organisation of the Fire Service – The Key Parties

Local Authorities / Fire Authorities

2.16 The Fire Service in Ireland is organised into 37 Fire Authorities, of which 29 are County Councils, 5 are County Boroughs (main cities), 1 Borough Corporation and 2 Urban District Councils (larger towns / cities). A list of Fire Authorities is provided in Appendix I. In general, all the County Councils have retained Fire Brigades with full time Brigades in the County Boroughs *i.e.* cities. The Brigades in Borough Corporations and Urban District Councils tend to be mixed with both full-time / retained Fire-fighters.

2.17 While the Fire Service is organised and delivered at local authority level, a number of other bodies and agencies are involved in the provision of the Service. The following sections outline their respective roles and responsibilities.

Department of the Environment and Local Government - Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section

2.18 The DoELG, as the overseeing body for the Fire Authorities, provides support for the development of Fire Services through a variety of mechanisms, as set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy and in the Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section's Business Plan. The underlying philosophy is a partnership between central and local government to ensure that persons, infrastructure and property are protected from fire and other emergencies.

2.19 The DoELG provides the legislative framework for the enforcement of fire safety and the operation of the Fire Service through the Fire Services Act, 1981. Advice and guidance is given to Fire Authorities on fire safety and emergency planning. Guidance on fire safety is also provided to those in charge of premises. The Department is involved in overseeing the development of Fire Services country-wide through a capital programme. Financial assistance is provided to Fire Authorities by way of grants towards the cost of providing fire stations and the purchase of fire appliances and emergency and rescue equipment as well as communications equipment. The Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section produces the national fire statistics on an annual basis. These statistics are based on information provided by the individual Fire Authorities.

2.20 There is a total staff of 19 in the Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section of the DoELG. The staff includes 14 administrative civil servants, headed up by a Principal Officer and five technical civil servants *i.e.* Fire Advisors, including one Principal Advisor and four Assistant Advisors.

2.21 The Construction Section of the DoELG is also responsible for the orderly development of, and good practice in, the construction sector, a key objective being to ensure a modern and effective building control system incorporating harmonised European construction product standards. The DoELG provides secretarial services to the Building Regulations Advisory Body (BRAB), the role of which is outlined later in this Chapter.

Fire Services Council (FSC)

2.22 The Fire Services Act, 1981 made provision for a FSC to be appointed by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government. Fire Service Councils have been active since 1983 and were established to provide a range of services for, or on behalf of, the Minister and Fire Authorities, as the Minister may specify from time to time.

> *……..the Council shall at the request of the Minister*
> *- perform such functions under section 15(3) as the Minister may assign to the Council,*
> *- assist in the preparation of guidelines, codes of practice, standards or regulations relating to fire safety,*
> *- undertake or arrange for the research in relation to fire or fire safety matters,*
> *- carry out an investigation into any fire or any operation of an emergency nature to which Section 25 relates and make a report thereon to the Minister.*
>
> ***Section 16.2, Fire Services Act, 1981***

2.23 The services the Council was requested to provide by the Minister are listed below.

> *The Council shall*
> - *provide, or arrange for the provision of instruction for the personnel of fire services, and other persons having regard to identified needs and requirements*
> - *contribute, in accordance with approved arrangements towards the expenses of a fire authority in sending personnel on approved courses or in making persons available to provide training on approved courses for fire service or other personnel*
> - *arrange as necessary and appropriate for the conduct of examinations and tests, for the granting of certificates on the results thereof and for the recognition of certificates and other awards of other bodies*
> - *administer on behalf of and in consultation with the Minister the scheme of Long Service Awards for fire service personnel*
> - *keep under review the overall training needs of fire service personnel and advise the Minister and/or fire authorities, as appropriate, as to measures to be taken towards meeting those needs*
> - *keep under review the qualifications and education of fire service personnel and advise the Minister and/or fire authorities as appropriate*
> - *provide such other services in relation to the above or related matters including emergency planning as the Minister may from time to time specify or request*
>
> ……..
>
> ***Statement of Services requested by the Minister for the Environment to be provided by the Fire Services Council, 24 January, 1996***

Each year, the Fire Service Council lays its Annual Report before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Resources available to the Council

2.24 The financial and logistical resources available to the Council comprise:

- provision to the Council of staff and office accommodation on a non-repayment basis by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government (IR£165,000 / 209,506 in 2001). Chief Executive Officer duties are performed by the Principal Officer of the Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section (approximately 30 per cent of their time). Technical Advice and running the annual training programme is provided to the Council by one of the Department's Assistant Fire Advisors (approximately 75 *per cent* of their time).
- the Council is financed by an annual grant from the DoELG (IR£326,000 / 413,935 in 2001) in addition to staff services and accommodation, *etc.*
- continued co-operation of Fire Authorities in releasing Fire Service personnel to participate in, and instruct, on Council courses usually in two week blocks.
- continued availability of the various training centres around the country.

2.25 The key activities in which the Council engages are:

- **Provision of Training**

  The Council concentrates its annual training programme on assisting Local Authorities specifically in the training of Fire Officers. Training of Fire-fighters is carried out by Fire Authorities themselves. The Council's programme for 2001 contains 22 courses with provision for approximately 430 training places. The training subcommittee of the Council has recently completed its review of training and a draft report is currently being considered. It outlines the direction Fire Services training should go in the future.

- **Procedural Manuals**

  In addition to the provision of training courses to assist Local Authorities, the Fire Service Council is preparing a series of procedural manuals which are intended to assist Fire Authorities in the operation of their Fire Service and help encourage standardisation in operational approaches and procedures of Fire Authorities. In 2001, the FSC issued first editions of both a Fire-fighters and of a Senior Officers Handbook.

- **Qualifications and Education**

  As part of the services provided by the Council, it keeps under review the qualifications and education of Fire Service personnel, as stipulated by the Minister, with a view to recommending a pathway to assist certain operational grades achieve the required qualifications to enable them compete for Senior Officer positions. The recommendations contained in the consultation document on the issue, circulated in mid 2001, have recently been adopted by the Council and are currently under negotiation at the LGMSB.

National Safety Council (NSC)

2.26 In 1987, the NSC was established as a semi-state body under the Local Government Services (Corporate Bodies) Act, 1971, (Statutory Instruments S1 327 and 328 of 1987).

2.27 The NSC took over the responsibilities of three independent autonomous bodies:

- Fire Prevention Council
- National Road Safety Association
- Irish Water Safety Association

2.28 In 2000, Water Safety was set up again as an independent semi-state body *i.e.* the Irish Water Safety Association.

2.29 The key objective of the NSC is to promote road and fire safety awareness. The means of accomplishing these objectives are varied and include publicity, education and training. Conferences and seminars are also organised. More specifically, and in accordance with its remit, the Council:-

- Organises conferences, training courses and competitions
- Provides advisory services and arranges publicity and educational programmes
- Publishes or otherwise makes available information, material, films or other matter
- Promotes or assists in the development of appropriate codes, systems or equipment
- Co-operates with other bodies

Funding

2.30 The Council is funded by a grant from the DoELG and contributions by the insurance industry together with sponsorships, donations, subscriptions from voluntary local effort, Local Authorities, commercial firms and from a large number of persons who are dedicated to the promotion of safety.

Budget

2.31 The Fire Safety budget for the year 2001 is IR£320,000 / 406,316.

Fire Safety

2.32 Specific activities related to Fire Safety are planned and implemented by the Fire Safety Committee under the overall authority of the NSC and consist of activities in the areas of:

- Education – Primary Schools
- Publicity – Media advertising campaigns and website
- Conferences and Seminars
- Leaflets and Posters
- Community Activities
- Training in presentation skills for fire service personnel and the provision of a fire safety lecture kit

Building Regulations Advisory Body (BRAB)

2.33 BRAB advises the Minister on all aspects of National Building Regulations including related Technical Guidance Documents on how to comply with the Regulations. Members are appointed by the Minister under Section 14 of the Building Control Act, 1990. The Construction Section of the DoELG provides secretarial and other support services to BRAB.

Roles and Functions of the Fire Authorities / Departments

2.34 The following table[3] gives an indication of the range of functions for which staff of the fire departments are responsible in Ireland.

Table 2.1: Functions for which Fire Departments are responsible

Functions	No of Fire Authorities
Fire Emergency Response Building Control – "Part B" Fire Safety Certificates Section 24 (Fire Services Act 1981) Licensing Dangerous Substances Licensing and Inspections Advice / Liaison with Events Organisers Fire Safety Activities*	All Fire Departments
Non Fire Emergency Response During Performance Inspections Major Emergency Planning *Review of Planning Applications*	The majority of Fire Departments *i.e.* with the exception of a small number of Fire Departments that responded to the questionnaire.
Other Building Control Functions	Approx. 45 per cent of Fire Departments that responded to the questionnaire.
Civil Defence[4]	Approx. 20 per cent of Fire Departments that responded to the questionnaire.
Ambulance Service	Dublin only

** primarily participation in programmed events during Fire Safety week, which is organised by the NSC. Other fire safety activities mentioned include responding to requests to speak to community groups, schools, etc. However many reported that activities in this area have been curtailed recently due to staff shortages and other demands on time.*

2.35 Other functions / activities reported by different fire departments include:

- ☐ Inspections under the 1875 Explosives Act;
- ☐ Pre Fire / Incident Planning;
- ☐ Fire Safety Management Training;
- ☐ Visits to halting sites;
- ☐ Collection of fire services charges;

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3 *This table has been collated on the basis of information provided in the Questionnaires returned by individual Fire Departments. 26 Questionnaires were completed providing information (partial information in some cases) on 31 out of a total of 37 Fire Authorities.*

4 *Civil Defence services are delivered at local level by the relevant Local Authority. These services are administered by a designated officer, the Civil Defence Officer, who normally reports to the County or City Manager. In some instances the Chief Fire Officer is the designated Civil Defence Officer.*

- Provision and Management of Training Centre Facilities;
- Interviews in local press and attendance at local community events.

2.36 The range of activities performed by the different Fire Authorities can generally be divided into two broad areas *i.e.* Responding to Emergencies (or the Emergency Response services) and Fire Prevention / Safety services. Under these headings we describe the key characteristics of the service provided and present some operational statistics for consideration.

Responding to Emergencies – The 'Operational' Fire Service

Introduction

2.37 Section 10 (2) of the Fire Service Act, 1981 requires a Fire Authority to:

a) make provision for the prompt and efficient extinguishing of fires in buildings and other places of all kinds in its functional area and for the protection and rescue of persons and property from injury by fire, and

b) establish and maintain a fire brigade, provide premises and make such other provision as it considers necessary or desirable for such purposes, and

c) make adequate provision for the reception of and response to calls for the assistance of the fire brigades.

2.38 In Ireland, over three thousand Fire-fighters are employed to deliver community fire and emergency response services. The service is no longer just involved in fire-fighting, it now responds to a range of other emergencies.

2.39 Below, we have presented some of the key statistics for the operational service, Appendix J provides further particulars of fire brigade activities by Fire Authority.

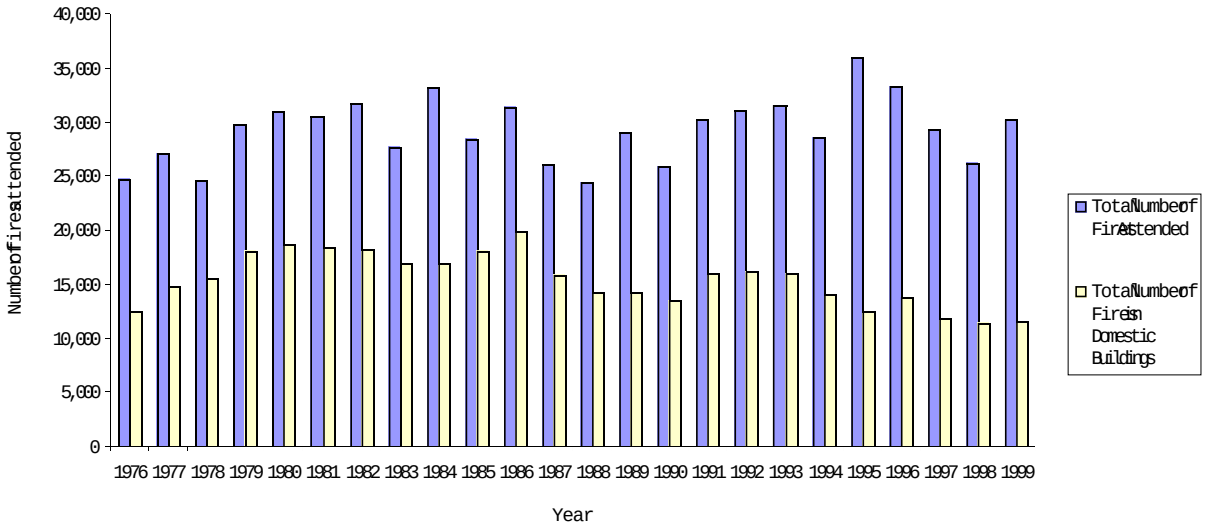
Operational Statistics

2.40 In 1999, the total number of emergency calls attended by Fire Brigades in Ireland was 53,927. This figure does not include emergency ambulance calls responded to by the Dublin Fire Brigade which totalled 90,236 for the same period. Fire related calls accounted for 30,210 of the total number of calls.

2.41 Over the period 1984 to 1999, the total number of fires attended by Fire Brigades has dropped from 33,134 to 30,210 and the number of domestic fires[5] has decreased from 16,877 to 11,540. Domestic fires now account for only 38 *per cent* of total fires as opposed to 50 *per cent* in the mid-eighties.

[5] *Domestic Fires includes fires in apartments, flats and bed-sitters.*

Graph 2.1: Total Number of Fires Compared to Total Number of Domestic Fires Attended by Fire Brigades in the period 1976-1999



Source: DoELG, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section, National Fire Statistics, 1999

2.42 Fire Brigades attended 7,726 chimney fire incidents in 1999. This represented 26 per cent of all fires attended in that year, compared to 30 *per cent* in 1998. This relatively high proportion of attendance at chimney fire incidents by Fire Brigades is reported to be unique to the Irish Fire Service as compared with other countries. False alarms, including both malicious and those made with good intent, accounted for 12,367 of all calls to the Fire Service. False alarm calls represented 23 *per cent* of calls in 1999 (10 *per cent* of total calls *i.e.* including ambulance calls) and on closer examination of the information provided, such calls were on average higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

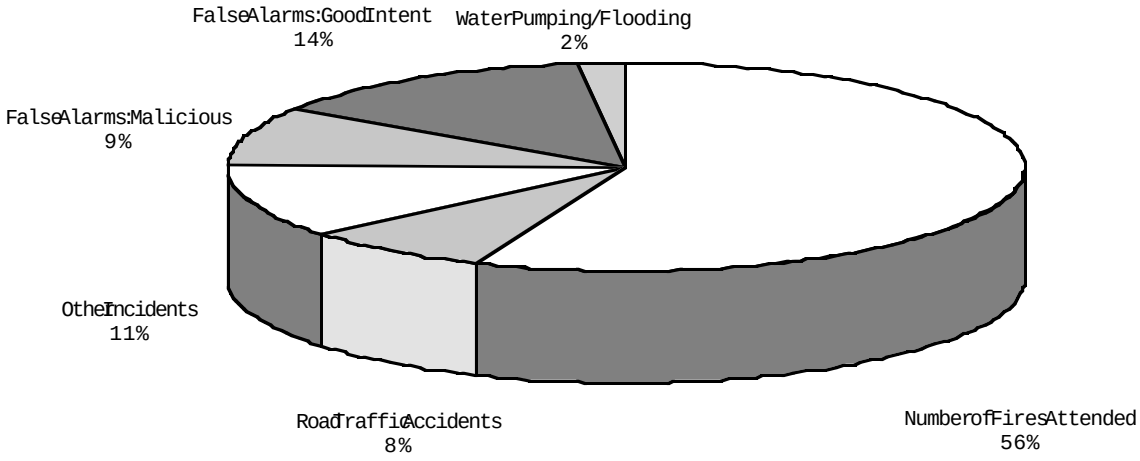
2.43 Section 25 of the Fire Services Act, 1981 empowers Fire Authorities to respond to other emergency calls such as non-fire emergency calls.

> *A fire authority may carry out or assist in any operations of an emergency nature, whether or not risk of fire is involved, and a fire authority may accordingly make such a provision for the rescue or safeguarding of persons and protection of property as it considers necessary for the purposes of that function.*

2.44 Fire Brigades around the country are responding to an increased number of non-fire and special service calls[6]. The total number of non-fire related calls reached 11,350 in 1999, representing 21 *per cent* of all calls attended by fire brigades in that year (*i.e.* excluding ambulance calls). This was up from 9,709 in 1998.

6 *Non fire and special service calls include Road Traffic Accidents, Water Pumping/Flooding, Rescue/Removal from Water, Other Non-fire Rescues, Hazardous Substances (No Fire) and other Miscellaneous calls.*

Graph 2.2: Incidents attended by Fire Brigades in 1999 (excluding Ambulance Calls)



Source: DoELG, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section, National Fire Statistics, 1999

Fire Prevention / Safety

2.45 The key elements of Government strategy for the provision of fire safety in buildings can be summarised as follows:

- The Building Control Act 1990 and related regulations which makes compliance with safety standards for new buildings mandatory and which allows enforcement of these standards by Building Control Authorities. Under the legislation, developers of new non-residential buildings are required to have their designs approved before building work commences *i.e.* apply for a Fire Safety Certificate. New private houses are among a small category of buildings, which are exempted from this latter requirement.
- The Fire Services Act, 1981 which:
  - Requires Fire Authorities to provide fire brigades;
  - Places duty of care in relation to safety of persons in a premises on the person in control of the premises;
  - Empowers officers of the Fire Authority to inspect premises and provides enforcement powers in the event that the premises are not deemed safe for the occupants;
  - Empowers the Fire Authority to give advice on fire safety.
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989 which places obligations on employers and employees in places of work to ensure reasonable standards of safety including fire safety.
- The promotion of public awareness of fire hazards and fire safety measures of all kinds through the aegis of the National Safety Council.

- Provision of support to Local Authorities in certain areas such as specialised Fire Officer training, (FSC) development of Codes of Practice and guidance documents on Fire Safety standards and in the provision of finance for capital projects.
- As single family dwellings are exempted from power of inspection by Officers of the Fire Authority, safety is accordingly provided for by good standards of design and construction in new building and by the promotion of safety awareness.

Building Control Legislation and the Fire Safety Certificate System

2.46 The basic premise on which the Building Control System has been developed is one of self-compliance and as such the onus is on the builder / developer / owner to construct a building in accordance with the Building Regulations Parts A-M. The DoELG has published Technical Guidance Documents for Fire Safety and other matters in relation to Parts A-M and a building constructed in accordance with the recommendations of these Technical Guidance Documents is regarded as prima-facie evidence of compliance with the legal requirements of the Building Regulations. Hence these Technical Guidance Documents form a common technical template for Architects and Fire Officers, who are acting on behalf of Building Control Authorities, for Part B, in assessing plans as part of the Building Control System. The Fire / Building Control Authorities may inspect buildings to ensure that builders are complying with the requirements of the Building Regulations. Relatively few inspections, however, are carried out to assess compliance with Part B (Fire Safety). The target inspection level for new developments by Building Control Authorities has been set by the DoELG at 12 *per cent* – 15 *per cent*. 73 *per cent* of Authorities achieved this target in 2000 after a sustained push by the Department. Detailed Building Control statistics are provided in Appendix K.

2.47 The fire aspects of the Building Regulations were deemed to be sufficiently important to require fire safety certification by the Building Control Authorities[7] at the design stage. Certification is required before commencing the construction of any building or for extensions / alterations / change of use of an existing building, subject to some exceptions (including single family dwellings). The Certificate is issued under the Building Control Regulations and essentially confirms that the design of the building complies with the Fire Safety Provision of the Building Regulations (Part "B"). It is noteworthy that the completed building is not certified by the Building Control Authority.

2.48 It should also be noted that, as part of national policy, the primary objective of Building Regulations as regards fire safety is the protection of life and not the protection of property, which in the view of the Government is a matter for the insurance industry. Measures, however, to protect life in most instances assist with the protection of property.

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7 Given the Fire Services experience in using "Draft" and "Proposed" Building Regulations, Fire Officers were assigned the role of assessing applications on behalf of Building Control Authorities. This aspect is generally regarded as one of the successes of the Building Control system.

2.49 Table 2.2 sets out the number of Fire Safety Certificates[8] processed by County Councils / Borough Corporations as Building Control Authorities since their inception in 1992. The very low proportion of refusals of Fire Safety Certificates by Local Authorities is noteworthy. There is no third party input as there is with the planning process. The only parties to the Building Control process are the Local Authority and the applicant. The applicant has a right to appeal the decision of the Authority to An Bord Pleanála.

Table 2.2: Fire Safety Certificate Applications processed from 1992 – 2000

Year	New applications	Invalid	Revised	Time Extended	Granted	Refused
1992	1112	259	182	69	619	12
1993	3932	549	500	288	3622	55
1994	4816	600	761	639	4123	46
1995	4936	485	811	714	3960	38
1996	5260	478	851	822	4268	65
1997	5867	503	627	763	5195	48
1998	6674	662	573	1107	5445	77
1999	6825	556	932	1408	5827	89
2000	7141	702	1554	2020	6173	96

Source: DoELG, Construction Section, Building Control Statistics

Other Fire Prevention / Safety Activities

2.50 Table 2.3 sets out the various Fire Safety inspections carried out by Fire Authorities of existing buildings for 1998, the latest year for which statistics are available (the figures for 1997 are presented in brackets). Fire Authorities have an inspection role as regards Dangerous Substances, in particular Petroleum under the Dangerous Substances Act (1972) and associated regulations (1979). A further breakdown of inspections (and details of offences) by Authority is presented in Appendix M

Table 2.3: Fire Safety Inspections and Details of Offences

Inspections	Applications Referred	Premises Inspected	Actual Inspections Undertaken
Section 13 – Planning	3418 (8618)		3164 (2780)
Fire Services Act, 1981		2494 (3887)	3099 (5054)
Section 24 – Licensing		4368 (3542)	6019 (5889)
	Premises Licensable	Premises Inspected	Actual Inspections Undertaken
Retail and Private Petroleum Stores	3045 (2945)	635 (559)	983 (694)
Bulk Stores	29 (36)	19 (8)	33 (11)
Oil Jetties	3 (3)	2 (0)	2 (0)
	Served	Appealed	
Fire Safety Notices (Section 20)	31	3	

Source: DoELG, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section, National Fire Prevention Statistics

8 *Further details on Fire Safety Certificates processed by individual Fire Authorities are presented in the Appendix L.*

2.51 Certain categories of buildings are not covered under the Fire Services Act, 1981 *i.e.* fire safety in private houses. It is the owners and / or occupiers responsibility to provide for fire safety in their own homes. In recognition of the fact that the vast majority of fatalities and casualties occur in the home, the Fire Service, through public awareness campaigns and the giving of advice and guidance to the public, is now becoming more involved in education and the promotion of Fire Safety.

2.52 As pointed out earlier, the NSC is the body primarily charged at national level with publicity campaigns for Fire Safety. However, developments such as local radio have altered the way in which the public can be influenced through the media and the Fire Authorities are now beginning to get involved much more in association with the NSC, in public information campaigns particularly in relation to the installation of self contained smoke detection systems in private houses. In this context, it should be noted that under the Fire Services Act, Fire Authorities are empowered to give advice to the public on Fire Safety matters, but they are not legally obliged to do so.

2.53 Paragraph 2.54 below sets out the numbers of staff involved in the provision of emergency response and fire prevention / safety services *i.e.* "operations" and "prevention" personnel.

Staffing in the Fire Service

Introduction

2.54 In 1999, the total number of staff employed by Fire Authorities was 3189. There were 1219 full-time fire personnel of which 263 were Officers and 1970 retained personnel of which 171 were Officers. There was in the order of 170 Senior Fire Officers including Chief Fire Officers and specialist Fire Prevention Officers. In summary, the split between the retained and the full-time Fire Service was 60 *percent* to 40 *percent*. The number of staff at the various ranks / grades within the Service are presented in Table 2.4 below. Appendix N contains more detailed Fire Service Personnel statistics. Table 2.5 outlines the rank structure that applies generally throughout the Irish Fire Service.

Table 2.4: Summary of Fire Service Personnel for 1999 (2000 where available)

Grade	Full-time	Temporary	Retained	Total
Chief Fire Officer	28			28
Assistant Chief Fire Officers (Operational)	37			37
Assistant Chief Fire Officers (Fire Prevention)	28			28
Senior Executive Fire Prevention Officer	6 (12)			12
Executive Fire Prevention Officer	12			12
Assistant Fire Prevention Officer	16 (13)	4 (7)		20
Graduate Engineer	2	2		4
Second Officer (Cork City)	1			1
Third Officer (Dublin only)	12 (13)			12
District Officer (Dublin only)	27 (28)			28
Station Officer	102		171	273
Sub-Officer	102		198	300
Leading Fire-fighter / Driver Mechanic / Fire-fighter	861 (873)		1601	2462

Source: Compiled by FGS from various sources

Table 2.5: Rank Structure within the Irish Fire Service

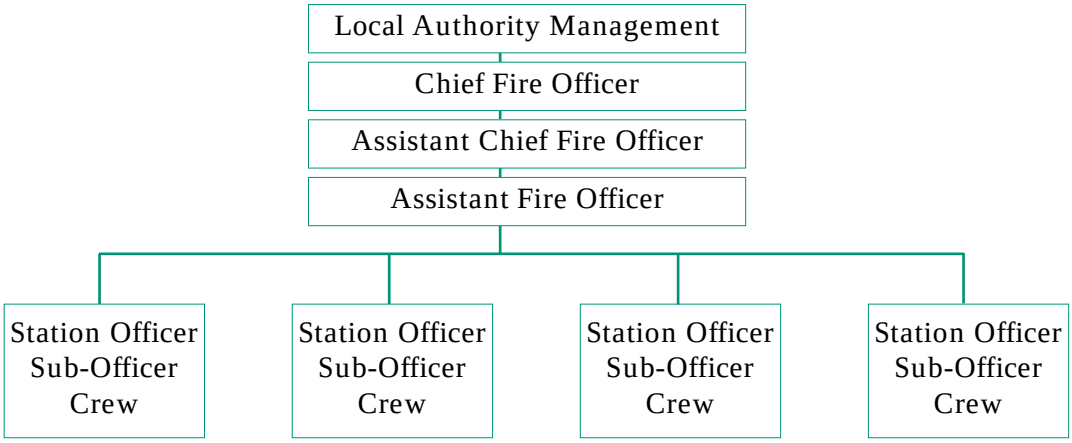
Rank Structure	
Chief Fire Officer	In charge of a fire department / brigade(s)
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Second in Command
Other Senior Officers	Third in Command, *depending on senior officer roster*
Second Officer (Cork City)	-
Third Officer (Dublin only)	-
District Officer (Dublin only)	In charge of one or more stations
Station Officer	In charge of one station
Sub-Officer	In charge of a crew
Leading Fire-fighter / Driver Mechanic	Senior Fire-fighter or driver who is also a mechanic
Fire-fighter	-

The rank structure is similar throughout Ireland with only minor differences e.g. Cork has leading Fire-fighters while Dublin does not. The rank of Chief Fire Officer is usually made by appointment, after a Local Appointments Commission (LAC) C competition, of a graduate and in the main persons appointed have not been promoted up through the fire-fighting ranks. Promotion from Fire-fighter to Sub-Officer is available after 7 years in Dublin and after 21 years in Cork.
Source: Compiled by FGS from various sources

Reporting Arrangements

2.55 The operation of the Fire Service in each Authority is under the control of the Chief Fire Officer (CFO). The CFO is assisted in this role by a number of Assistant Chief Fire Officers. In the past the CFO generally reported through the County / City Engineer to the County / City Manager. With the introduction of revised management structures under Better Local Government, the CFO will now report to a Director of Services, which appears to be the Director of Environmental Services in the majority of cases. The Fire Service is typically delivered through a structure as illustrated below.

Figure 2.1: Typical Fire Authority Structure



Source: Fire-fighter Handbook, FSC

2.56 There are three grades of personnel involved in the Fire Service in Ireland:

- Fire-fighters
- Junior Officers
- Senior Officers

Fire-fighters

2.57 There are two types of Fire-fighters employed in the Irish Fire Service *i.e.* retained Fire-fighters who are primarily employed in rural areas and full-time Fire-fighters who can be found in the larger urban areas.

Retained Fire-fighters

2.58 Retained Fire-fighters are recruited locally and have to fulfil certain requirements with regard to where they reside and their availability *i.e.* to live and work within a mile of the fire station and must be freely available at all times (24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year round, with the exception of holidays) to attend incidents. Generally the self-employed are favoured. Retained Fire-fighters are alerted by pagers from their homes or workplace and are expected to attend at their fire stations and mount fire appliances within five minutes of being alerted to an emergency call.

Full-time Fire-fighters

2.59 Full-time Fire-fighters are recruited by advertisement in the daily newspapers. The competition for full-time positions within the Service is high with large numbers of applications for a limited number of positions. The process is a lengthy one including, in most cases, an aptitude test, two interviews as well as physical tests. A shift system operates in all full-time stations and Fire-fighters are expected to "go mobile" to an incident within one minute of being alerted.

Junior Officers

2.60 Junior Officers are recruited from the Fire-fighter grades. They undergo training in command and control and station management. Junior Officers are recruited initially as Sub Officers or Crew Commanders before being promoted to Station Commanders. In Dublin, the top rank of Junior Officer and bottom rank of Senior Fire Officer (District Officer) is employed on a shift basis. There are no statutory national examinations for promotion, however Dublin Fire Brigade has recently introduced a new promotion system, which includes, amongst other elements, examinations. At the moment, discussions are ongoing with staffing interests on a system which will allow Junior Officers proceed to higher ranks, ultimately to Chief Fire Officer. However, under current arrangements this will require them to attend university to obtain a degree in either Engineering or Architecture. Junior Fire Officers can either be retained or full-time depending on their Brigade.

Senior Officers

2.61 For the most part, in Ireland, a two-tier dual entry system exists where Senior Officers are predominantly university graduates in either Engineering or Architecture. While there are some Senior Officers who are employed on operational duties (ACFO Operations) who are not graduates, this situation is slowly changing and more and more direct entry graduates are filling these positions.

Women in the Fire Service

2.62 In 1999, of the total number (3,189) of people employed in the Fire Service in Ireland only thirty-one (0.97 *per cent*) were women. Of these, eighteen were retained Fire-fighters, six were full-time Fire-fighters with the remaining seven holding Senior Officers positions.

2.63 Women have been very slow to enter the Fire Service, with the first women being placed on Dublin Corporation's panel as recently as 1992. The first full-time female Fire-fighters, two in total, joined the Service in 1997. The last two competitions[9] for recruitment to Dublin Corporation, also attracted very low numbers of female applicants (6 *per cent*), of which, 5 per cent were successfully placed on panels. Entry requirements for the Fire Service in the 1970s and 1980s blatantly discriminated against women with a minimum height requirement of 5'6" to 5'8", specific chest size and male oriented physical exercises. The Local Government Management Services Board reviewed and amended the recruitment requirements of Fire-fighters in the early 1990s to remove any criteria that would discriminate against women. This process towards equality was furthered in the mid 1990s with further developments such as the Occupational Health System.

2.64 While women accounted for only 4 *per cent* of Officers in 1999, with none at the top grade of Chief Fire Officer[10], 14 *per cent* of the Assistant Chief Fire Officers (Prevention) at this time were women. There were no women in the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations) position. Officer posts currently require a degree in Engineering and the slight increase in women entering the Officer grade between 1992 and 1999 could be attributed to the increase in women taking up Engineering studies at third level.

Career Progression

2.65 Under current arrangements *i.e.* the dual entry system, it is not possible to progress from Fire-fighter to Senior Officer level without first obtaining the necessary engineering or architectural qualifications.

Present Arrangements for Fire Cover

2.66 Under Section 10 (3) of the Fire Services Act 1981:

> *"A fire authority shall, in the exercise of its functions under subsection (2), have regard (in addition to all other relevant considerations) to the nature of the fire hazards and the probable incidence and extent of fires in its functional area, the character of the area and the value of the property liable to be damaged by fires."*

9 *1997 and 2000*

10 *This situation has recently changed with the appointment of the first woman Chief Fire Officer to the Wexford County Fire Service.*

2.67 Each Local Authority / Fire Authority is therefore responsible for the provision of fire cover in their area and the "setting of their own standards".

2.68 The approach by Local Authorities to fire cover standards has primarily been based on having fire brigades in centres of population. While the approaches vary throughout the country, most Fire Authorities in reviewing fire cover have adopted, to a lesser or greater extent, the UK Class model A-D. Speed and weight of response as part of a PDA-based regime tend to be the main criteria used.

2.69 An examination of information provided by individual Fire Authorities confirms that there is no standard approach to fire cover. The first minimum attendance however to a fire in both urban and rural areas is a water tender with a crew comprising a Commanding Officer, Driver and three to four Fire-fighters. In large urban areas, the standard response to a house fire is two appliances. This is upgraded in Dublin to include an ambulance and possibly an aerial appliance and emergency tender depending on the information received regarding persons reported, etc. A response time of ten to fifteen minutes, or less is achieved in most urban situations. A response time of up to twenty minutes is reasonable in most rural areas but times in excess of this are recorded in remote rural areas. In recent times, acute traffic congestion is an impediment to the achievement of good response times. This is particularly true for Dublin. Road accidents and incidents involving chemicals are, in general, attended by one or two water tenders and an emergency tender. The number of crew available in the majority of fire stations varies from eight to ten personnel. This generally includes a Station Officer and Sub-Officer. On average, the number of Fire-fighters per 1000 inhabitants for all Fire Brigades is 0.88. This figure ranges from 1.2 in some Authorities to 0.52 in other, mainly, rural Fire Authorities.

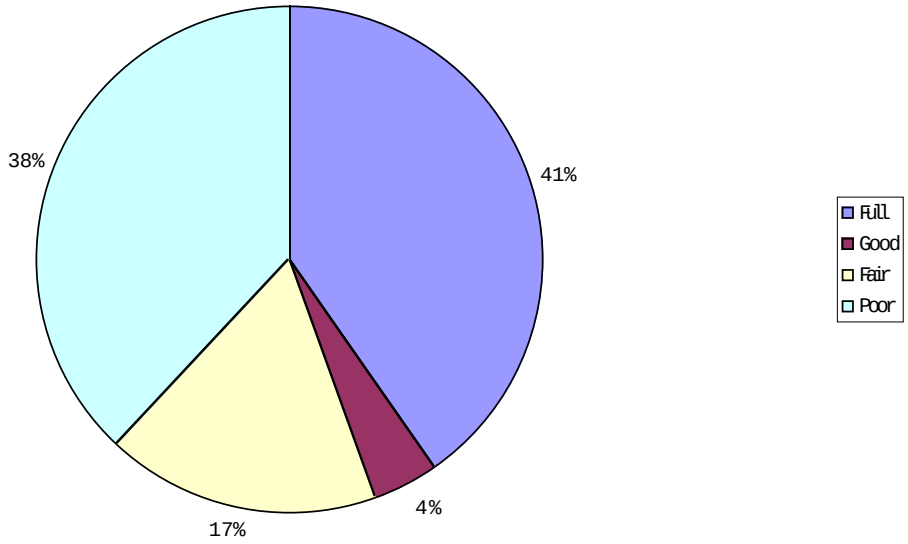
Fire Stations

2.70 Currently there are 221 fire stations[11] in Ireland. The average surface area per station is 32,000 ha. However, this figure varies from small areas in some cities *e.g.* 1900 ha in Limerick to large areas in the order of 50,000 ha in coastal rural Fire Authorities *e.g.* Galway, Kerry, Clare and Wexford. Similarly the number of inhabitants per station varies from 60,000 in the cities to on average 13,000 in the rural Fire Authorities. The uniqueness of each Fire Authority's functional area in terms of geography and topography, surface area and population density has a large bearing on the development/allocation of resources in terms of fire stations, number of Fire-fighters and number of fire engines in the Authority.

[11] *A full list of stations, and fire posts, is provided, in the alphabetical order, in the Appendix O.*

2.71 In March 2000, the DoELG conducted a survey[12] to assess the status of fire station facilities across the Fire Authorities. The results of the survey are represented in Graph 2.3 below. It was found that the stations responding to the greatest number of calls have relatively "full" to "good" facilities. More than half of the facilities however, rated fair to poor.

Graph 2.3 Assessment of Fire Station Facilities



Source: Compiled by FGS from data provided by DoELG

2.72 Table 2.6 below presents details on the average age of stations and the number of calls to incident handled by different types of station.

Table 2.6 – Average Age of Stations and Number of Calls by Type of Station

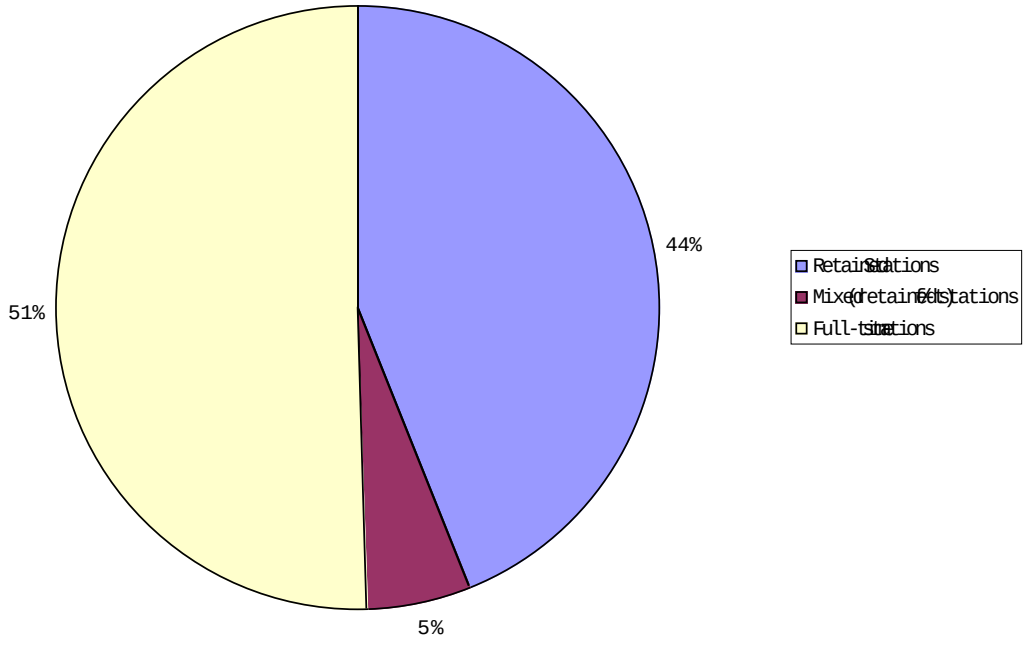
	No.	Calls	Ave. Age*
Retained Stations	206	20867	31
Mixed (retained / f-t) stations	4	2397	41
Full-time stations	13	109212	20
TOTAL	**223**	**132476**	**31**

** In calculating the average age of stations 'outliers' were excluded.*

Source: Compiled by FGS on information provided by the DOELG, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section

12 *The Survey of Fire Service Facilities is presented in Appendix P.*

Graph 2.4 Percentage Breakdown of Calls by Type of Stations (excluding ambulance calls)



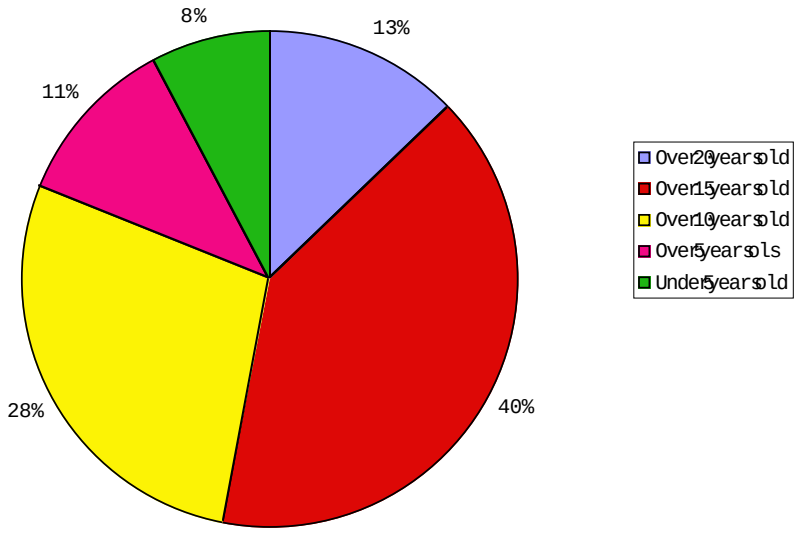
Source: Compiled by FGS from data provided by DoELG

Appliance Fleet and Equipment

2.73 In 2000, there were 333 first line appliances in operation in the country. The types of appliances being used by different Fire Authorities include Water Tenders (Pumping Appliances) and specialist appliances including Aerial Appliances (Hydraulic Platforms and Turn Table Ladders) and Emergency Tenders. Other special appliances, include Water Tankers, Foam Tankers, Rapid Intervention Vehicles. Ambulances are used by the Dublin Fire Brigade as part of an integrated Fire and Emergency Ambulance Service in the Dublin area. The appliances and equipment at the time of their purchase generally comply with British Standards. Graph 2.5 provides an age profile for all first line appliances in operation in 2000[13].

[13] *This information can be found in tabular format in Appendix Q. Also included is the number of fire appliances per 1000 population.*

Graph 2.5 Local Authority Fire Appliances - March 2000



Source: Compiled by FGS from data provided by DoELG

Performance Management

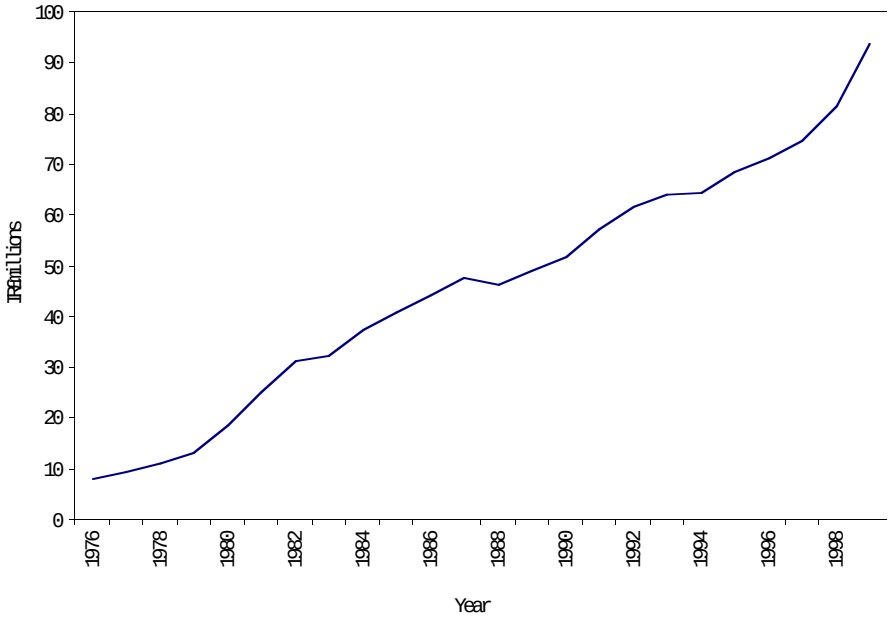
2.74 There are few performance indicators, if any, for the Irish Fire Services. In recent times, with the advent of information technology, different aspects of the operational service are beginning to be examined. These include elements such as turn-out / response times, the degree of utilisation of different appliances, the relative workload of fire stations, *etc.* It is proposed over a period of time to consolidate this information with a view to establishing operational norms against which the efficiency of the Service can be measured.

Cost of the Fire Service and Funding Arrangements

Introduction

2.75 The total cost of the national Fire Service in 1999 was IR£94m / 119.36m. This comprised the IR£86.5m / €109.83m spent by Local Authorities *i.e.* revenue expenditure and the IR£8m / €10.16m provided by the DoELG in respect of capital projects. Appendix R details total expenditure by Fire Authority in 1999.

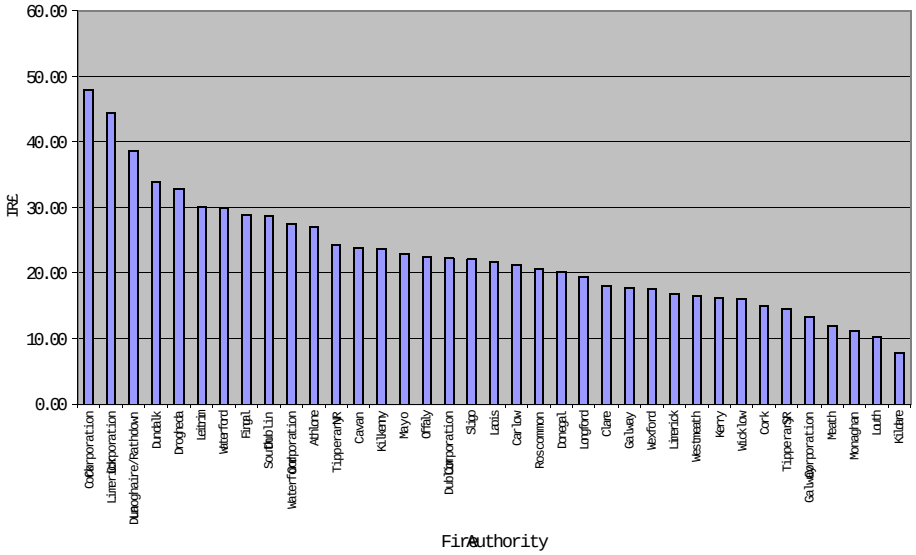
Graph 2.6 Cost of the Fire Service 1976-1999



Source: DoELG, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section, National Fire Statistics, 1999

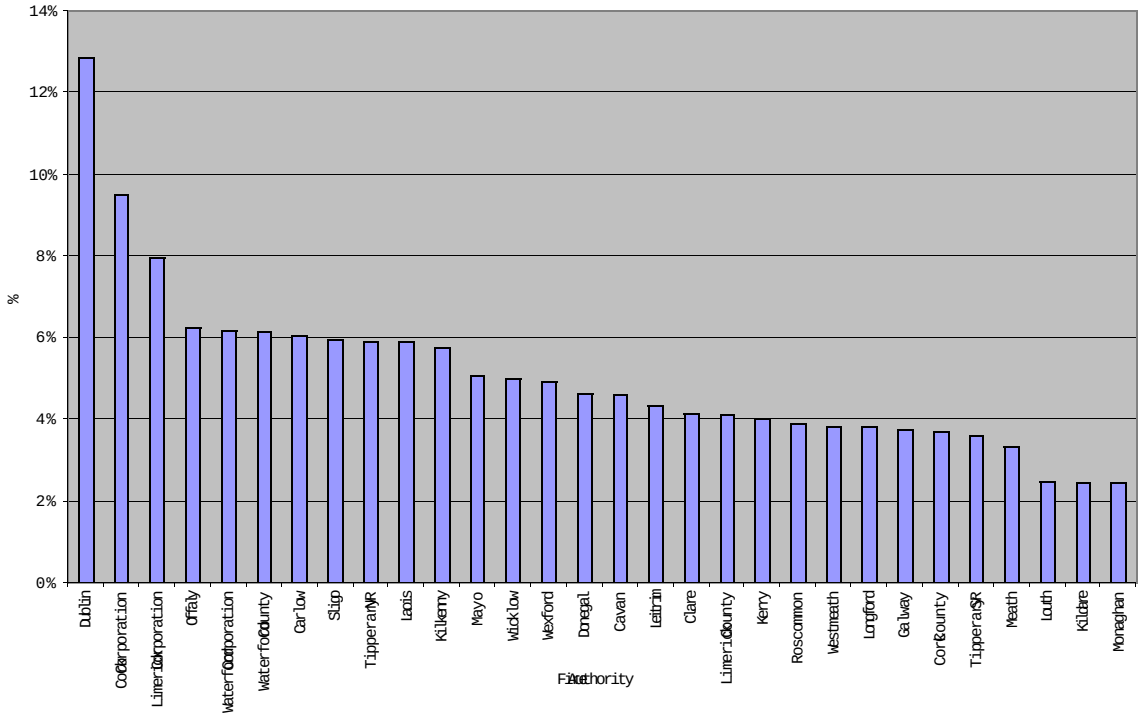
2.76 While, on average, expenditure per head of population on the Fire Service is IR£26 / 33 it can be, as indicated by Graph 2.7 below, as low as IR£8 / 10.16 per head in some Fire Authorities. Similarly, while the average expenditure on the Fire Service is 5 *per cent* of total Local Authority expenditure, the percentage of expenditure on the Fire Service can be as low as 2 *per cent* of total Local Authority expenditure in some cases. Appendix S provides a further breakdown.

Graph 2.7 Fire Service Expenditure per capita



Source: DoELG, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section, National Fire Statistics, 1999

Graph2.8:FireServiceExpenditureasaPercentageofTotalLocalAuthorityExpenditure



Source: Compiled by FGS from various sources

2.77 Expenditure on the Fire Services is broken down into two broad areas:

i) Revenue – costs associated with the day to day running of the Fire Service;

ii) Capital – costs associated with fire stations, appliances and equipment.

2.78 All funding for capital projects is provided by Central Government (DoELG) on a grant basis to the local Fire Authorities. Some Fire Authorities purchase equipment / replacements from own funds. In the past ten years, computer aided mobilisation (CAMP) and geographic information systems (GIS) have also been purchased.

Capital Funding – A History

2.79 The need for significant investment in the Fire Service was highlighted in the early 1980s following the Stardust disaster, and in response, a 50 *per cent* subsidy was introduced by the, then DOE on Local Authority capital spend. This was replaced in 1987 by a 100 per cent grant from the DoELG. However, around the same time, capital spending was severely cut by the Government as part of overall financial corrections to restore National finances.

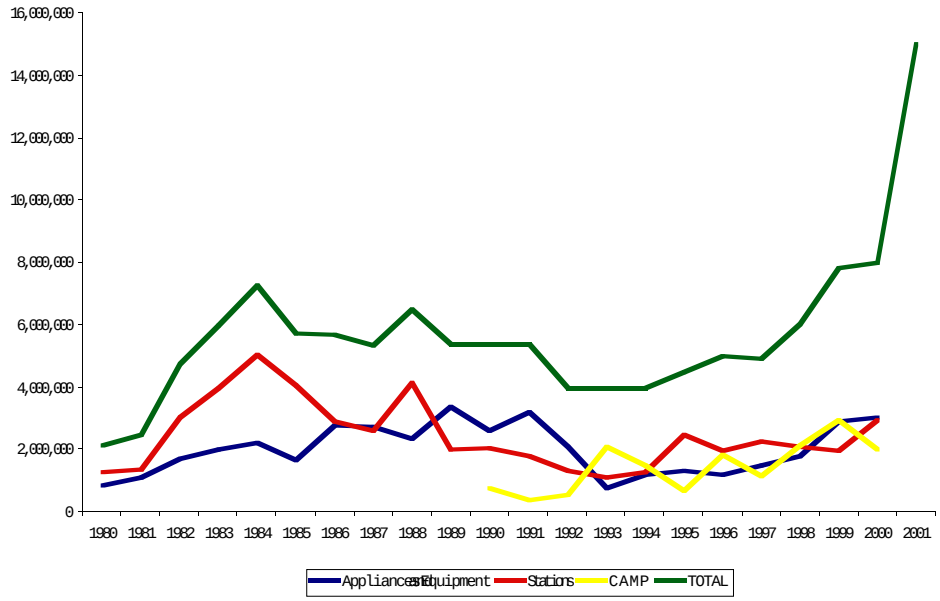
2.80 This was at a time when CAMP project expenditure was coming on stream. As a result, relatively less of the capital spent during this period was spent on the appliance fleet and many of the appliances were purchased second-hand from the UK.

2.81 It is only under the present Minister, that the capital programme has increased significantly. At the end of January 2001, Mr. Noel Dempsey, T.D., Minister for the Environment and Local

Government announced that the Fire Services capital programme was to be almost doubled. The capital allocation for the programme in 2001, at IR£1m / €19.1m, is the highest on record. This represented an increase of over 220 *per cent* on the corresponding figure for 1997.

2.82 This level of increase, while welcomed, is posing some real challenges, not least due to the fact that the appliance manufacturing industry had almost been wiped out in the "bad" times. Graph 2.9 below shows capital expenditure on the Fire Service over the period 1980 – 2000. Capital grant paid in 1999 and 2000 by Fire Authority can be found in Appendix T.

Graph 2.9 Capital Funding (IR£) for the period 1980-2001



Source: Compiled by FGS from data provided by DoELG

Funding

2.83 The Fire Service in Ireland is funded on a revenue basis (day-to-day expenses), from Local Authority resources. In general, there are three separate sources of revenue available to Local Authorities, these are:

State Funding

2.84 Each Local Authority is in receipt of an annual grant from Central Government (*i.e.* the Local Government Fund). Payments made are to cover what was in the past raised by local taxation / rates (local tax is no longer payable by members of the public, either as rates on private houses (since 1977), land (since 1982) or domestic water charges (since 1996)). Funds are allocated in a manner which recognises differences in the financial base of local authorities.

Rates (Local Tax)

2.85 Rates are levied annually on commercial premises. These represent a large source of income for some Local Authorities, in particular Urban Authorities.

Charges

2.86 The majority of the Local Authorities charge for many of their services including elements of their Fire Service *e.g.* attendance at chimney fires, special services, *etc.* However, charges levied are not necessarily invested back into that Service and in many instances are income to general funds.

Budgeting

2.87 The Fire Authorities are budgeted for in the same way as other Local Authority budgets. The method of preparation, time scale and format are stipulated in 'The Public Bodies Order 1946'.

2.88 The percentage of the budget involved in salaries and wages is high. For example, approximately 80 *per cent* – 85 *per cent* of Dublin Fire Brigade's total budget is on payroll costs. The remainder of the budget is for overhead costs such as rent, heating, insurance, petrol, oil and maintenance of vehicles. Approximately IR£250,000 / €317,435 is spent annually on training by the FSC. This is primarily used to fund or subvent Training for Officers in the Fire Service.

2.89 Fire Authorities may provide the total Fire Service for all or part of the neighbouring Local / Fire Authority functional area or assist one another at incidents. Some Local Authorities have legal agreements (Section 59 agreements) in place with neighbouring Local Authorities, for payment for services provided. In some cases, it is a cost per incident, while in others it is an annual / flat charge.

Responding to Major Emergencies

2.90 By definition, a major emergency is any event which, usually with little or no warning, causes or threatens death or injury, serious disruption of essential services or damage to property beyond the normal capabilities of the Gardaí, Local Authorities (including Fire Authorities) and Health Services. Recent examples of Major Emergencies include Stardust (1981), the Whiddy Island disaster (1979) and the loss of an Air India passenger aircraft (1985).

2.91 There is no statutory basis for Major Emergency Planning in Ireland. However, fire brigade involvement in emergency operations is covered by the Fire Service Act, 1981 and regulations made thereunder, and there are also three publications issued by the DoELG, which provide guidance to the Fire Service in the event of a Major Emergency. These publications are,

- Local Authority, Major Emergency Plan; Model
- Explanatory Memorandum on the Model, Local Authority Major Emergency Plan
- Major Emergency Plans, Planning and Staging an Exercise; General Advice & Guidelines

2.92 These documents set out a framework for a co-ordinated approach between the three statutory Emergency Services, nominally the Local Authority – (the Fire Service being the front-line Local Authority Emergency service), the Gardaí and the Local Health Board. At national level, each Government Department is responsible for ensuring that emergency

plans exist in respect of their own area of responsibility. The application of the existing emergency planning arrangements is overseen by an inter-departmental committee set up in the 1980's, which is chaired by the DoELG and includes representatives from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Defence.

2.93 Major emergency plans are held by Local Authorities, Health Boards and Garda divisions. Under the provisions of these plans, each of the three emergency services has a Controller on-site to manage activities. There is provision also for an off-site coordinating group, with the role of synchronizing the efforts of the three principal on-site services. The off-site coordination group, which consists of senior representatives of the three emergency services, does not get involved in the detailed site response. In September 2001, the Department of Defence was given a dual role in relation to major emergencies. This involves the preparation of responses to new terrorist threats and an overseeing role over emergency planning.

Training and Education

2.94 Under the Fire Services Act, 1981, Fire Authorities are obliged to provide training for Fire Service personnel in their employment. Training in the Fire Service is at present delivered in two ways. Firstly, recruit training and breathing apparatus training is generally provided locally by the Fire Authorities, however some full-time Brigades send recruits to UK Brigade Training Centres for training. Secondly, the FSC, which was set up by the then Minister of the Environment after enactment of the 1981 Act to deal with national training, provides training for Junior and Senior Officers, in both fire-fighting and fire prevention areas. Training is provided in a number of centres throughout the country. Many Senior Officers have travelled to the UK and Denmark for training. There is no designated national training centre for the Fire Service although six regional centres are used by the FSC for national training. Senior Officers are required to have a basic university degree, usually in Engineering or Architecture. Currently, the entire educational system is being examined by the FSC in an effort to provide opportunities for Fire-fighters to progress to Senior Officer ranks.

2.95 Difficulties are encountered in providing graduate entrants with adequate operational experience. In an effort to address these difficulties, the Fire Service Council provides training for graduate officers in operational matters. These courses now take place in Ireland. In the past, officers were sent to the Fire Service College in Moreton-in-Marsh in the UK and the Fire Service College in Copenhagen, Denmark.

2.96 The primary explanation for the difficulties experienced in ensuring some Senior Fire Officers have adequate fire-fighting command experience is due in the main to the low occurrence of large scale incidents in rural areas. The imbalance in terms of number and scale of such incidents has resulted in the need to simulate a range of incidents as exercises. This is becoming an increasingly common feature of Fire Service Officer training. In addition to initial command training, the FSC also holds an annual series of Senior Command courses / seminars, where experiences are shared and skills refreshed.

Mobilisation / Communications and IT

Computer Aided Mobilisation Project – CAMP – An Introduction

2.97 The need for enhanced mobilisation facilities was long recognised and after much debate the CAMP project(s) came on stream.

2.98 The Computer Aided Mobilisation Project (CAMP) has its root in the late 1980s when as part of the DoELG's role of developing and coordinating the provision of Fire Services by the Fire Authorities, it was proposed that three regional based control centres (in the East, Munster and the West) would be developed, capable of serving the mobilisation and communication needs of the Fire Authorities in the three regions.

2.99 Throughout the 1990's, work on developing the project has progressed in the three regions, with the creation of management and operating structures, development and agreement of user requirements and technical specifications, provision of buildings, communications and mobilisation infrastructure and provision of staffing.

2.100 At present, the Limerick centre, *i.e.* CAMP Munster, is in operation and services practically all of Munster. The Dublin Centre, CAMP East, caters for the Dublin area and counties Laois, Meath and Longford and Wexford *via* an interim system. It also serves the Eastern Regional Health Authority, Dublin area. It is hoped to bring the remainder of Leinster and counties Cavan and Monaghan into the system on a phased basis by the end of 2002. The Castlebar Centre, CAMP West, which will serve Connaught and County Donegal, has recently been constructed and the mobilisation communications infrastructure provided. It is hoped it will come into operation shortly following resolution of IR issues.

Use of IT

2.101 The position of the Fire Services within Local Authority structures has a significant influence on the use of Information Technology (IT) within the Fire Services. Indeed, many of the Fire Service IT systems are provided directly through, and managed by, the Local Authority. With the exception of the Computer Aided Mobilisation Project (CAMP) the selection and implementation of systems is largely conducted at local level. The current use of IT in the Fire Service is described below.

Fire Prevention

2.102 The Fire Authorities that use software to manage the processing of planning applications, licence applications, fire certificate applications, building inspections and commencement notices have implemented the Diamond system. A number of different versions of the system are currently in use. The Diamond system has been developed over the last 5-10 years by a third party software house, which licences the package to each Authority. Support for the package is provided by Mallon, a company which recently became owners of the package. The collection of monies and payments reconciliation in relation to licence applications remains a largely manual process at present. However, this situation will be resolved in a number of authorities by the further roll-out of the Agresso system.

Pre-fire planning

2.103 There is currently minimal use of IT, with the exception of word processing, in the preparation of pre-fire plans. In most cases, Fire Officers prepare pre-fire plans on visiting the site, where they gather all relevant details and plan out how they would handle an incident in that particular site if it occurred. Paper copies of the plans are held in the stations that have been assigned primary pre-determined attendance responsibility for that premises. In some cases, hard copies of the plans are also kept on the appliances in that station so they will be readily accessible when attending an incident. Generally, it is the responsibility of crews at various stations to keep these plans up to date.

Determining Location of Incidents

2.104 Emergency calls originate from Eircom and are routed straight to the relevant regional mobilisation and communications centre or directly to the relevant Fire Authority where the linkage to the Command Centre has yet to be implemented. Some Command Centres provide emergency call taking and mobilisation of Ambulance Services in addition to Fire Services, which is charged on to the relevant Health Board. In addition, some provide out of hours call cover for other Local Authority emergency services (*e.g.* flooding).

2.105 Operators determine the location of a fire/incident from the information provided by the caller and by searching the local address database. These address databases were developed as part of the CAMP project, and are maintained and updated by each Fire Authority for addresses in its jurisdiction. The application of GIS (Geographical Information Systems) has been assessed by some Fire Authorities but is far from being applied on a day-to-day basis in aiding the location of incidents.

Deployment of Resources (Mobilisation)

2.106 This process involves the operator selecting the required attendance based on the pre-determined attendance for the incident address/location and the type of incident. Pre-determined attendances are hard coded into the address databases against each address and the operator alerts the relevant fire station to the incident via the mobilisation communications network. Where the primary pre-determined attendance is already occupied, the secondary one is selected and so on. The Fire Services have invested heavily over the past few years in their communications network, to back up the CAMP initiatives. Communications (both voice and messaging) between Command Centres, Fire Stations and the appliances deployed to deal with incidents is *via* a microwave radio network in each Region. High levels of resilience have been built into the network to maximise possible outages, and through use of alternative routing, ISDN and PSTN lines.

Providing Information to Fire crews in attendance

2.107 Once deployed, fire crews need access to as much information as possible at the location of the incident. In some cases, before appliances are en route to an incident they are issued with a printed message detailing the address, route plan, pre-fire plan, *etc.* Detailed information is only available where pre-fire plans have been drawn up. Special information on hazardous materials is also available. These details are stored in a special system called ChemData. There is a large dependence on fire crews having familiarised themselves with pre-fire plans in advance.

2.108 There is, at present, little use of Vehicle Mobile Data Systems (VMDS) to provide access to information in appliances. However, international experience as well as some pilot testing of ruggedized PCs and fax machines on board appliances, connected to GSM networks to transmit pre-fire plans and other information to deployed appliances, points to the potential of technology to assist in operations.

2.109 Some specialised software has been examined, particularly in relation to hazardous sites that pose special risks to the population in the event of a fire or other disaster. For example, Cork County has a Gas Dispersion model to predict the area that would be affected by a leakage at one of the area's chemical plants. This depends on feeding in details of weather conditions such as wind direction and speed.

Tracking Progress

2.110 Status reporting is used to relay messages *via* microwave connections from the appliance to the command centre at pre-determined stages during an incident. These messages are recorded automatically against each incident in the command and control centre system. For accountability purposes, the system records every message that is transmitted between call out, mobilisation, attendance at incident and return with exact times against each incident record. Standard status messages have been agreed nationally and for the most part have been adopted.

2.111 Where necessary fire crew can use the communications network to talk to base, but this is kept to a minimum. Minimal voice traffic is achieved by sending a status message requesting voice communication.

Fire Reporting

2.112 Fire reports are prepared for every incident that involved a deployment of resources. This is manually prepared and captures information about each incident and its outcome. Relevant details from the fire report are updated to the command control system against the incident record. The consolidation of these details facilitates the analysis of incidents for management information purposes. This also provides details used in the preparation of billing, calculation of payments to retained Fire-fighting crews, information regarding resource usage and personnel experience and training.

Management Reports and Statistics

2.113 There is little uniformity with regard to the provision of management information and statistical analysis of incident data, mainly due to the lack of a standard structure for warehousing this data. Each Authority/Station tends to cater for their requirements in isolation. Generally, data feeds are extracted from central CAMP databases and are sent to local centres where local chiefs generate their own reports on these standalone datasets. The result is that overall national reports and statistics are difficult to compile.

HR & Payroll

2.114 There is no standard electronic means of capturing details on personnel, *e.g.* personal information, training, medical history, disciplinary details, *etc.* Records tend to be maintained by both brigades and the Local Authorities. In some cases, simple MS Access databases are used to store details.

2.115 Currently, payments and allowances are generally calculated manually from data captured within databases such as those hosted by CAMP and through the Fire Report and attendance data. This information is usually manually summarised and pay sheets are generated. In most situations the relevant Local Authority carries out payroll processing, but the Fire Service must provide the shift and other allowance details.

Rostering

2.116 Rostering is used to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of personnel available to perform operational duties at a given time. It is generally a manual process whereby a planning board or 'slate' is used in each station for manpower planning.

Vehicle Maintenance Planning

2.117 The scheduling of vehicle maintenance is currently handled manually. No preventative maintenance plans or details of maintenance carried out on each vehicle are available.

Budget Monitoring & Control

2.118 A system selected by Local Government Computer Services Board (LGCSB), Agresso is in use nationwide, except for Cork City who use JD Edwards.

2.119 The use of IT within the Fire Service is closely linked to the relationship between the Service and the Local Authorities. There is significant variability in the use of IT and in the development strategies of various Fire Authorities. The exception to this is the CAMP process, although even this project has involved significant Authority-specific developments.

Key Facts about the Irish Fire Service

- Each Local Authority is charged with the duty of providing a Fire Service in their functional area, under the Fire Services Act, 1981.
- The Fire Service is part of the Local Authority system and is delivered as part of Programme Group 5 - Environmental Protection and absorbs 50 *per cent* of the cost of the Environmental Protection Budget on average in Local Authorities.
- While the day to day operations of the Fire Service is under the direction of the Chief Fire Officer in a Local Authority, ultimately the County Manager or his/her delegate is by definition responsible for the provision of Fire Protection Services in the Authority's functional area.
- Most of the functions in relation to the Fire Service in the Local Authority are executive functions and are the responsibility of the Manager of the Authority with the exception of Preparation of Fire and Operations Plan, known as the Section 26 Plan, which is a reserved function and is a matter for the Council as a whole *i.e* locally elected politicians.
- The Department of Environment and Local Government has an 'advisory' role and as such does not have the authority to inspect Local Authority Fire Services or impose Performance Standards for the Fire Service on the Local Authorities.
- Fire services in Ireland are delivered by full-time brigades in the large urban areas and retained (or part-time brigade) in the rest of the country.
- Recruitment to the Fire Service is at two levels *i.e.* as a recruit Fire-fighter or to the lower levels of Senior Officer grades. Under current arrangements, only graduates in engineering (or architecture) can progress to the level of Chief Fire Officer.
- Training of Fire Service personnel is the responsibility of the individual Fire Authorities. They are assisted in this by the FSC, which organises training for Officers.
- The DoELG provides capital funding for fire stations, appliance fleet and equipment as well as mobilisation / communication equipment.
- The NSC is the statutory body responsible for the promotion of fire safety awareness. Individual Fire Authorities are empowered to give advice on public safety under the Fire Services Act, 1981.

3. KEY TRENDS AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARATORS

Introduction

3.1 Before we approach the task of analysing the current Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland in depth, it is, perhaps, important that we should attempt to locate the Irish regime as regards its performance relative to key international trends. We found this to be a surprisingly difficult task for the reasons set out below.

3.2 The facts of the matter are that there are no definitive figures available for fire deaths, fire injuries and other fire-related losses (property *etc.*) in Ireland. The difficulties arising from the lack of definitive data are compounded by the absence, anywhere within the current Fire Safety and Fire Services regime, of a focused research and development function which can address the information and research gap in relation to statistical data together with other key relevant factors (such as causation). This lack of a research and development function is a key weakness in the current regime and is, therefore, addressed in more detail later in our findings and conclusions and in our recommendations for the future.

3.3 The problems caused for comparative analysis arising from the deficit in national statistics are mirrored in the fact that internationally, there is no standardised approach to the collection and presentation of data on fire deaths, injuries and other losses from fire-related incidents which has universal recognition and acceptance. There are relatively few sources where such data is collected, worked on, consistently published and used by official bodies.

3.4 The position in relation to Ireland is that the only official figure available for fire deaths is in relation to those arising from fire incidents to which Fire Brigades respond. There is no data available on injuries and other losses arising from fire incidents. Statistics on fire deaths based only on incidents responded to by Fire Brigades understate the real position.

3.5 During the extensive process of consultation, which was an inherent part of the Review, it was impressed upon us, time and again, by many of the key stakeholders that the official figures, based only on brigade-reported fire deaths, under-represent the extent of total deaths arising from fire-related incidents and, therefore, fail to acknowledge the seriousness of the current situation. Many stakeholders also believe that the fact that there is no official reporting and data capture in relation to injuries and other losses from fire-related incidents, fails to acknowledge that there is a serious problem in Ireland in these areas. The concerns expressed to us throughout the Review on these issues were articulated by official bodies which play key roles in the current Fire Safety and Fire Services regime, by representatives of key industry sectors in the current regime and by individuals and companies who responded to our call for submissions or were otherwise interviewed by us during the course of our work.

Our Approach

3.6 Given the inherent difficulties involved in analysing trends and in undertaking comparative international studies arising from the foregoing factors, we decided to approach the task in hand on the following basis:

- Because there is no definitive data available on factors such as injuries and losses from fire related incidents, we concentrated on attempting to identify trends in relation to fire deaths in order to benchmark the Irish Fire Safety and Fire Services regime.
- We recognised from the outset that we needed to look at two sets of figures in relation to fire deaths *i.e.* those relating to fire deaths arising from incidents to which Fire Brigades responded and total deaths from fire-related incidents.
- The other key parameters on which we felt we could source reliable data in order to benchmark the Irish regime were those in respect of the per capita spend on Fire Services and the numbers of Fire-fighters employed relative to population size.
- While many of the parties to the Review process cited figures to us, particularly in relation to fire deaths in Ireland, which greatly exceeded the official figures (based on brigade-reported fire deaths only), we were unable to authoritatively and independently verify the claims being made. We decided, therefore, that we would only use figures which were available from recognised sources, which are published and which are, therefore, already in the public domain and which have been presented in a consistent manner over lengthy periods of time thereby enabling underlying trends to be identified.
- Finally, we recognised that, given the difficulties with definitions, data capture, the formats in which data are presented and other matters arising from the lack of a uniform international approach, we should emphasise that the concentration has, of necessity, to be on what the analysis of available data tells us about underlying trends over time rather than on the absolute figures involved which are more open to question and, therefore, of lesser relevance in the context of the conclusions which a Review of this nature needs to highlight.

3.7 The work undertaken by us in attempting to benchmark the Irish regime against key trends and international comparators was only one element of a very widespread and intensive work programme addressing the myriad issues in our Terms of Reference. We did not, nor could we, attempt, within the limited confines of the time available to us, seek to compensate for the absence of national research or of international uniformity of approach in relation to the parameters examined. Of its nature, our work in this area is limited in its scope and attempts merely to take a high-level view of overall underlying trends over time which seem to us to be relevant to an analysis, at this point in time, of the Irish Fire Safety and Fire Services regime. We fully accept that much more definitive work needs to be done in this area on a continuing basis and, later in this report, we recommend how the research and development gap, which currently exists, needs to be addressed into the future.

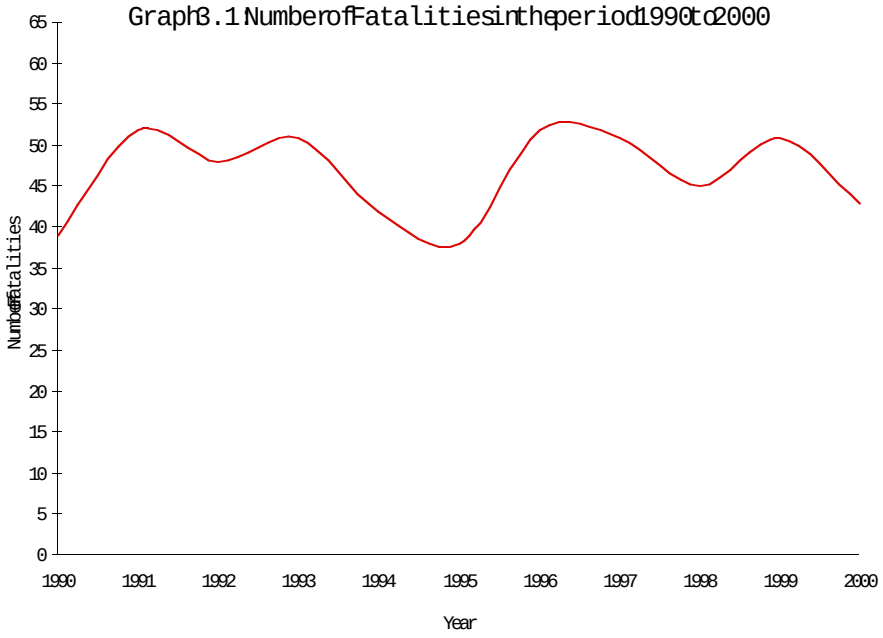
3.8 In the paragraphs below we set out our views on key trends in the following areas:

- Brigade-reported fire deaths.
- Total fire deaths.
- Per capita spend on Fire Services.
- Fire-fighters employed relative to population size.
- Conclusions based on our analysis of the above parameters.

Brigade-Reported Fire Deaths

3.9 While there is no available national data on the number of people injured by fire each year, available statistics on the level of fatalities arising from incidents to which Fire Brigades responded are collected. In Ireland, the average number of deaths per year since 1976 is 56, with the majority of deaths occurring in domestic buildings. However, these statistics have been skewed by such tragedies as the Stardust fire, which claimed a disproportionately high number of fatalities. The average annual number of deaths is more typically in the range of between 40 to 50 persons[1]. However it should be borne in mind that these statistics relate only to fires to which the Fire Service responded and do not therefore reflect the full picture.

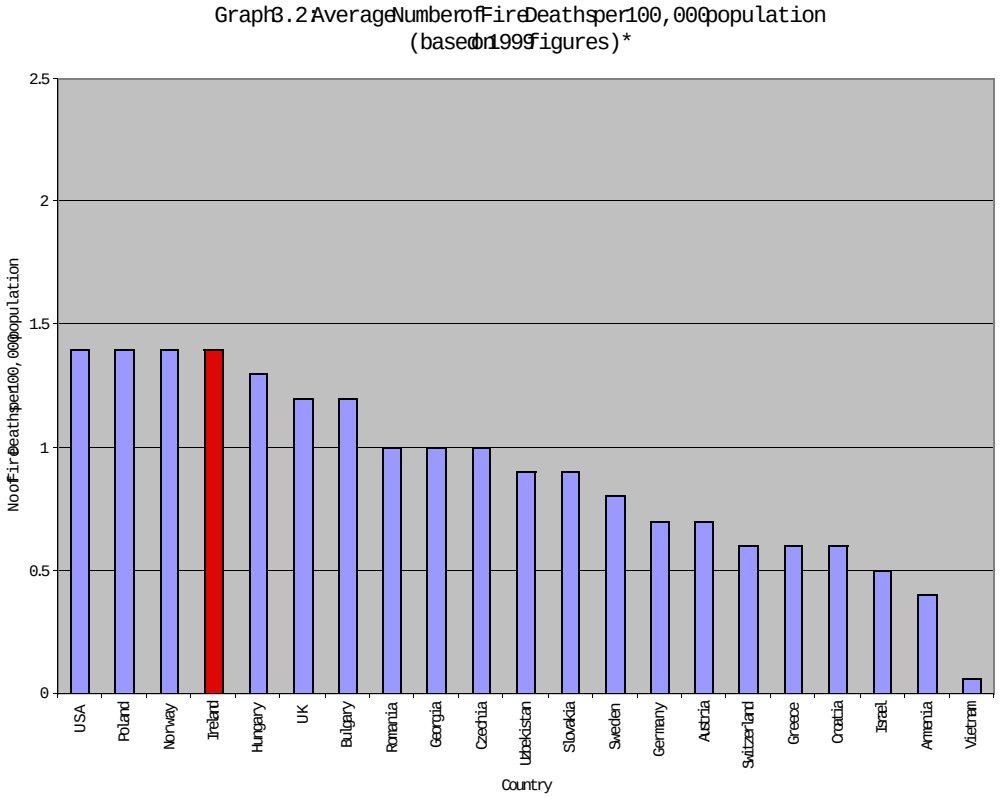
3.10 Overall, in the last eleven years, 512 people are officially reported as having died as the result of fires with the number of fatalities resulting from fires fluctuating from a low of 38 in 1995 to a high of 52 in 1996. In 2000, 43 people lost their lives. The following graph, Graph 3.1, demonstrates that the figures for the number of people killed each year has remained relatively stable and is currently in decline. It is not possible at present to accurately determine if this is part of a future trend or simply a continuation of past cycles as represented on the graph below.



Source: DoELG, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section, National Fire Statistics

[1] *A breakdown of fatalities by Fire Authority for the period 1990 to 2000 is presented in Appendix v.*

3.11 The only authoritative source which we could find which consistently publishes international comparative data on brigade-reported fire deaths only is the Comité Technique International de Prevention et d'Extinction du Feu (CTIF). Graph 3.2 below sets out where Ireland is positioned, according to the CTIF data, in relation to brigade-reported fire deaths.



Source: CTIF

** Figures for a number of republics of the former USSR have not been included in the graph.*

3.12 The foregoing graph indicates that Ireland is at the upper end of the spectrum as regards brigade-reported fire deaths. As reported to us throughout the Review, the majority of fire deaths in Ireland arise in domestic fire situations. It would appear, therefore, that Ireland has a particular problem in relation to the number of fire deaths arising in domestic fire situations.

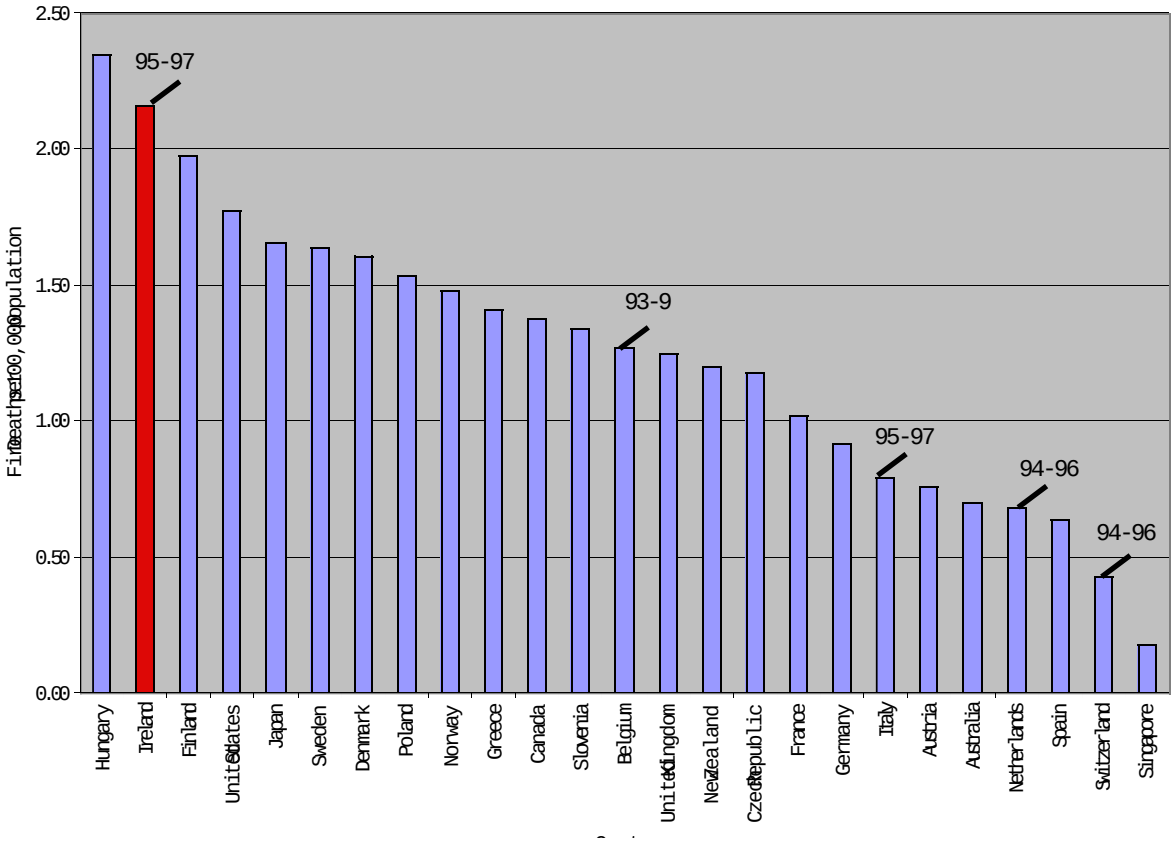
Total Fire Deaths

3.13 In conducting the Review, we found that there was much more concentration at international level in looking at total fire deaths. It seems to us, from our work in this area, that there is common acceptance of the fact that brigade-reported fire deaths only tell part of the story. In addressing total fire deaths, those concerned are seeking to take a view of the overall picture and to include fire deaths arising from incidents not responded to by Fire Brigades, instances where fire is not the primary cause of death recorded on the death certificate and a variety of other situations in which fire is a contributing factor in relation to the fatality involved.

3.14 The most authoritative source undertaking research and consistently publishing data on total fire deaths is the World Fire Statistics Centre (WFSC). The WFSC has been publishing international comparative data on total fire deaths for at least the last ten years (we did not seek to go back any further). This data is published on a consistent basis over that period making adjustments, based on a set of statistical principles, for known factors not included in brigade-reported fire deaths. The WFSC data is widely used by Fire Authorities all over the world and by official bodies such as the UN, the WHO and the OECD. The Audit Commission in the UK used WFSC data in conducting its Review of the Fire Services in England and Wales.

3.15 Graph 3.3 below positions Ireland at the upper end of the spectrum as regards total fire deaths per 100,000 population according to the WFSC data. Again, this data would appear to indicate that Ireland has a problem with the total number of fire deaths.

Graph 3.3 Fire Deaths per 100,000 population (based on figures for the years 1996-1998)



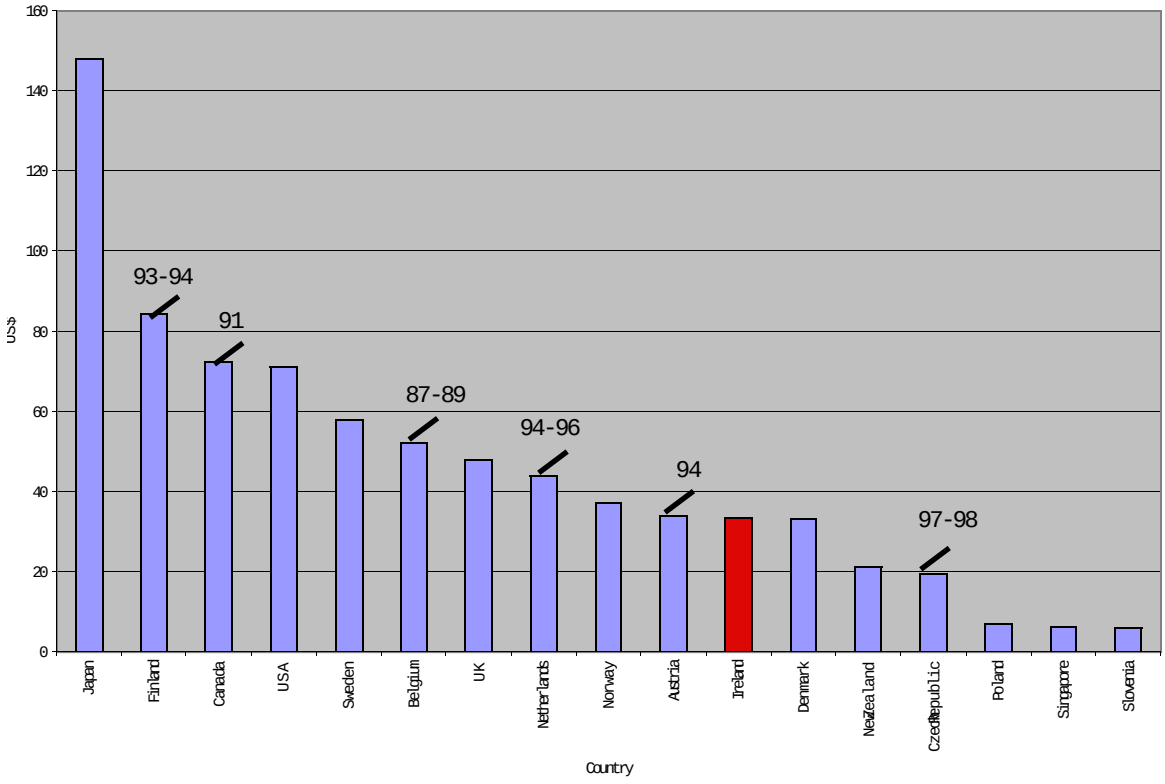
Source: World Fire Statistics Centre, Report prepared for UN Economic and Social Council, August 2001

** The above graph is based on figures for fire deaths published by the World Health Organisation which have been adjusted to take account of such factors as fire deaths unknown to fire brigades or not recorded on death certificates.*

Per Capita Spend on Fire Services

3.16 Ireland had a per capita of US$33.50 on Fire Services in 1998. While this figure is higher than the per capita spend of US$21 in New Zealand and US$20 in the Czech Republic, it is significantly less than the per capita expenditure of US$72 in both the US and Canada and US$148 in Japan. Both Finland and Sweden also had considerably higher levels of expenditure with US$85 and US$58 respectively. On average, overall Fire Service expenditure in Ireland was 30 *per cent* less than average spending of those EU countries sampled.

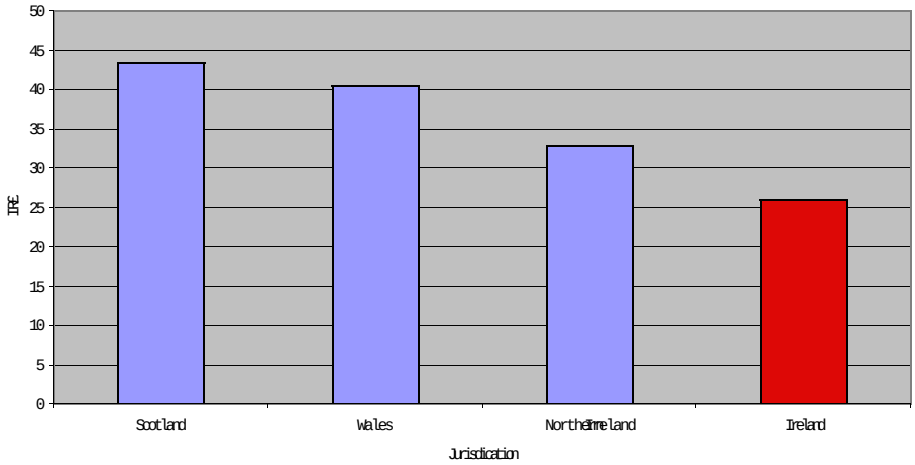
Graph 3.4: Per Capita Spend on Fire Services (US$) based on figures over the period 1996-1998*



Source: Compiled by FGS from various sources
** or latest available figures*

3.17 While in a wider international context, Ireland may have less per capita expenditure on its Fire Services, comparative analysis with its closest neighbours also shows that per capita expenditure is significantly below that in the UK. In 1999, Ireland's expenditure was IR£26/€33 per capita. This was more than 36 *per cent* less than in Wales (IR£40/€51), 21 *per cent* less than in Northern Ireland (IR£33/€42) and 40 *per cent* less than in Scotland (IR£43/€55). In summary, Ireland's spend is between 21 *per cent* and 40 *per cent* lower than the spend in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Graph 3.5: Per Capita Spend on Fire Services
(based on expenditure in 1999)

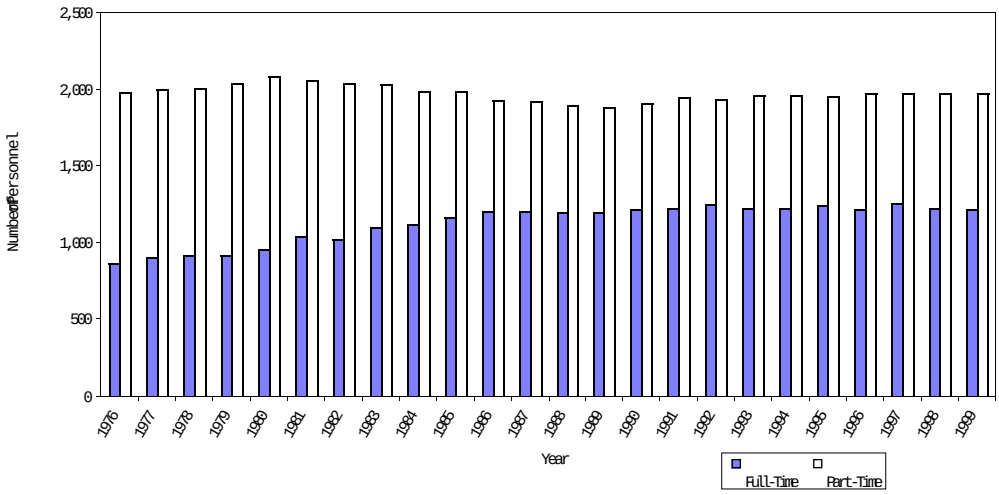


Source: Compiled by FGS from various sources (expenditure data for Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland sourced from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), UK)
Population data: Ireland (1996), Northern Ireland (1996), Wales and Scotland (1991)

Number of Fire-Fighters

3.18 The following graph represents the level of full-time and part-time fire-fighting personnel from 1976 to 1999. While the number of part-time Fire-fighters in this period has fluctuated dramatically with a high of approximately 2,083 in1980 to a low of 1,880 in 1989, there has been a substantial rise in the number of full-time Fire-fighters from a level of 870 in 1976 to 1,219 in 1999. Trends over this period indicate that, while the number of part-time Fire-fighters has remained relatively stable, the number of full-time Fire-fighters, while rising significantly from 1976 to 1986, has now begun to level off.

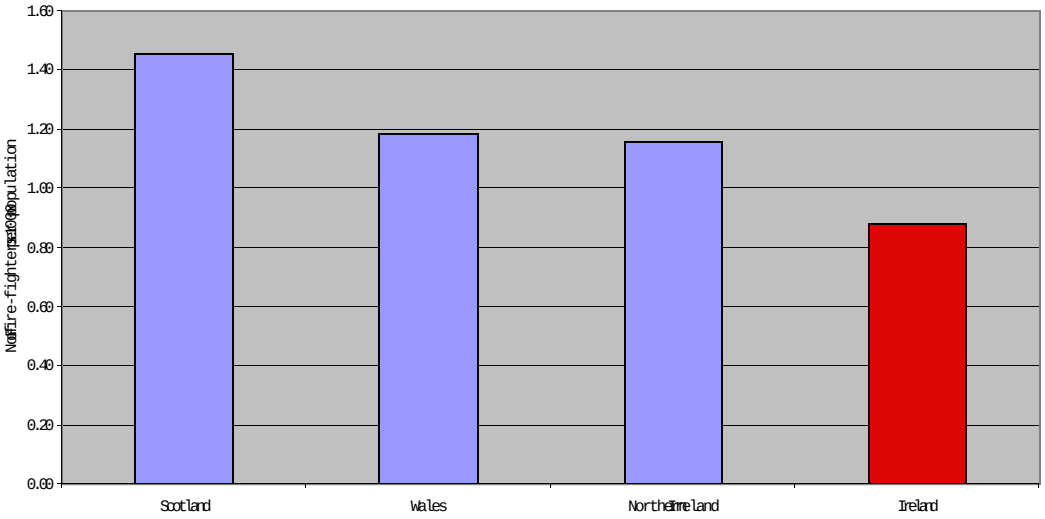
Graph 3.6 Number of Full-time and Part-time Personnel
(1976-1999)



Source: DoELG, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section, National Fire Statistics

3.19 A comparative analysis of the number of Fire-fighters in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, shows that Ireland has a lower number of Fire-fighters per capita. While the number of Fire-fighters per 1000 population in Northern Ireland and Wales is almost 1.2 and over 1.4 in Scotland, it is only 0.9 in Ireland.

Graph 8.7 Number of Fire-fighters per 1000 population
(based on figures for the years 1998 and 1999)



Source: Compiled by FGS from various sources

Conclusions

3.20 In essence, based on our work on trends and international comparators, we want to make four key points (supported, where appropriate by authoritative, recognised and officially published data) as follows:

- Nobody knows definitively what the incidence of fire deaths in Ireland really is. This situation is compounded by the absence, anywhere within the current regime, of a research and development function addressing this and other relevant issues (such as causation). The gap in this area needs to be rectified as part of the structural and organisational solution arising from this Review and we have made appropriate recommendations in that regard later in this report.

- The foregoing situation should not prevent the Review from addressing the issue of where Ireland stands as regards major trends internationally given the degree of stakeholder concern about the extent of under-reporting of deaths, injury and other losses from fire-related incidents and in relation to the seriousness of the problem.

- While absolute figures are open to question, there is little doubt in our mind but that, as an overall trend, the concerns expressed to us are well founded and that Ireland is at the upper end of the spectrum as regards fire deaths relative to population size (particularly as regards deaths in domestic fire situations). The CTIF (brigade-reported fire deaths) and WFSC (total fire deaths) published data bear out this contention.

- Again, while absolute figures, particularly for individual years, can be misleading, there is no doubt in our minds but that, looked at over time, Ireland is also at the lower end of the spectrum as regards per capita spend on Fire Services and at the lower end of the spectrum as regards the ratio of Fire-fighters employed relative to population size. We believe that these issues are of most relevance in relation to the countries closest to us and we have, therefore, verified the figures used for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with the office of Her Majestys' Chief Inspector of Fire Services and with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in the UK.

4. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

Introduction

4.1 In this Section of our report, we set out our findings and conclusions in relation to the current Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland. The findings and conclusions set out in this Section were presented to and discussed at interim stages in the Review process with the Review Advisory Group.

4.2 Our findings and conclusions are set out below in the following sequence:

- Firstly, we acknowledge the positive features of the current regime and highlight those areas where improvements have been made since the last major review of Fire Safety and Fire Services.
- We then deal with a number of overarching strategic problems which transcend the detailed findings and conclusions set out later and which we believe must now be addressed if this Review is to achieve the overall objective of further enhancing the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime.
- Finally, we set out our detailed findings and conclusions under each of the headings identified in Paragraph 2.4 of our Terms of Reference as described in Appendix A.

4.3 It is inevitable in review processes of this nature that the overwhelming concentration is on identifying and making recommendations in relation to those areas where improvement is required. In our view, it is to be expected that many such areas will exist given the length of time since the last review took place. Indeed, we believe that the potential for significant deficiencies to exist was a key consideration in the commissioning of the Review by the Minister in the first instance. It is also clear that the Minister and Government had already recognised the existence of certain deficiencies through the considerably enhanced programme of capital expenditure which has operated over the last number of years.

The Positive Features

4.4 It is, perhaps, particularly important to ensure balance in the treatment of the subject matter for this Review. In undertaking a Strategic Review of Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland in the current climate, we are, of course, anxious not to further exacerbate an already uneasy climate of public concern on general public safety and emergency response matters by raising unnecessary fears.

4.5 An important element, therefore, of balance must be maintained in addressing the shortcomings in the current regime. The following positive features of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland are, therefore, be acknowledged:

- There have been major improvements in the regime since the last significant review in 1975 and since the report of the Stardust Tribunal in 1982.
- Ireland has not had a record, in recent years, of major fire-related accidents and incidents in multiple-occupancy buildings leading to large numbers of casualties.

- The Fire Service in Ireland is fortunate to have available to it, in the full-time and retained cadres of staff at all levels, a large number of professional, competent and committed personnel.
- There has been an enormous increase in the number of non-fire emergency calls to which the Fire Service responds (road traffic accidents, specialist rescue incidents, flooding, hazardous materials, accidents and spillages etc). Such empiric evidence as exists suggests that, despite this massive increase, fire and non-fire emergency calls, are responded to, in the main, in a timely and effective manner.
- Over the last 2 to 3 years, a significant increase in the capital expenditure programme for the Fire Service is making substantial inroads into the necessary upgrading of fire stations (both new builds and refurbishment of existing stations), the appliance fleet and equipment generally.
- The framework approach to Major Emergency Management has generally stood the test of time. In relative terms, major emergency response plans have, fortunately, only needed to be operationalised on an infrequent basis and when activated, have provided an adequate response framework for dealing with the incidents involved.
- Significant investment has been made in developing and improving the communications and mobilisation regime particularly through the CAMP (Computer Aided Mobilisation Project) programme. The technical architecture for a much more efficient and effective call-out regime is now in place or in the final stages of procurement.
- With 221 Fire Stations distributed throughout the State, there is no compelling evidence of widespread unacceptable risk exposure in relation to fire cover having regard to the traditional and long-standing speed and weight of response methods for determining fire cover employed, to date, in Ireland.
- The extensive consultation process undertaken by us, including public consultation fora at venues throughout the country, elicited levels of understandable public concern. However, there was no evidence of a major negative public outcry in relation to the performance of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime.
- The Fire Service is generally held in high regard by the public. Where Local Authorities have undertaken public satisfaction surveys in relation to services provided, the Fire Service has generally rated very highly.
- While outside the scope of this Review, pay and other remuneration-related conditions of service for full-time and retained fire personnel have improved considerably in relative terms over the last decade or so.
- Again, in relative terms, the training regime for Fire Service personnel, especially at Officer level, has improved immeasurably over the years.
- Through the Fire Services and Building Control Acts, the introduction of more stringent licensing of premises as well as licensing of indoor and outdoor events and through planned legislative changes, already in the pipeline, to strengthen the enforcement regime, the general legislative underpinning for fire safety has been considerably tightened.

4.6 We are most anxious that the views expressed to us, as regards deficiencies in the current regime, and, indeed, our own findings and conclusions should not, in light of the foregoing comments, be taken out of context. We would be disappointed if the outcome of this Review, as expressed in this report, was to be used to level unbalanced criticism on the current regime or to raise unnecessary public fears.

The Strategic Problems

4.7 There are, we believe, a number of overarching strategic problems with the current regime which transcend the more detailed findings and conclusions set out later. It is important that we keep a focus on these strategic problems because, within the unavoidable constraints of finite resource availability, we would like to put forward a vision and a framework for the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland which will deal with the problems identified and which will, over time, enable the Fire Service in this country to be brought into line with international best practice. We see the outcome of this Strategic Review as a blueprint for developing the regime into one which will be aligned with societal expectations, within which Fire Service personnel at all levels will be able to have safe and fulfilling professional careers and which will deliver excellence in the service provided to the public allied to demonstrable value for money.

4.8 In order to do so, we believe that the current regime is, notwithstanding its obvious strengths, in need of fundamental overhaul. This is a key conclusion not lightly reached. In our view, the systems and regime which have served us well over the years have arrived at a stage in their evolution where extensive change is now needed in order to develop a new paradigm into the future. As pointed out already, our views in this regard should not be interpreted as unbalanced criticism of the current regime, nor of individuals and groups operating within it, but more as a recognition that the goalposts have changed, that best practice has moved on and that the pace and nature of modernisation required in the Fire Service has outstripped the capacity of a regime, having its origins in the immediate post Second World War era and which was last reviewed in 1975, to cope.

4.9 Leaving aside the details of the shortcomings outlined later in this report, we believe that the case for fundamental change can best be summarised by reference to the following overarching strategic problems with the current arrangements:

- The Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland has suffered, in our view, from a lack of prioritisation and from relatively low levels of investment over the years. Government, we believe, has recognised this fact through its enhanced investment programme on the capital side in recent years. In conducting this Review, we have found, not surprisingly perhaps, a similar long-standing, under-investment problem on the non-capital side despite increasing costs. A pragmatic approach will, we believe, be necessary in order to ensure a sustainable funding regime into the future which will maintain the higher level of capital funding already identified by Government as being necessary and allow a similar increased focus on non-capital investment, without placing an undue burden on the Local Authorities or on the

Exchequer in that regard. Consumers, beneficiary industry sectors, local and central Government will all need to play a role in providing such a sustainable and affordable funding regime into the future.

- The diffusion of authority, responsibility and accountability for the planning, development and delivery of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime across a multiplicity of statutory bodies, in our view, contributes to a situation of low priority, lack of focus and lack of coherent national leadership for the overall regime. Fire Safety and Fire Services struggle for prioritisation in the Department of the Environment and Local Government which has a massive policy agenda dominated by key national issues in areas such as housing, roads, waste, planning, water, the National Development Plan, the National Spatial Strategy, oversight of the Local Government System including the implementation of significant modernisation under the Better Local Government (BLG) programme etc. Against this background, the current national regime for Fire Safety and Fire Services which splits responsibility between the Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section of the DOELG (which is staffed by administrative and technical civil servants), an under-funded and under-resourced statutory Fire Services Council staffed by Department officials, a separate administrative and technical building control function and with the promotion, awareness, and education functions on the fire side assigned to a separate statutory National Safety Council, in our view, is unsuited to providing a strong and coherent national focus and leadership regime.
- The foregoing problem is compounded by the fact that the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime is actually delivered by 37 independent Local Authorities which are also the statutory Fire Authorities and the Building Control Authorities. Their independence in the discharge of their functions is an inherent strength in the system of Local Government in Ireland and is a fundamental tenet in the systemic relationship between Central and Local Government in this country. It is not the purpose of this Review to seek to inappropriately alter the relationship between Central and Local Government and, in that regard, the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime must continue to be delivered locally. However, the problems inherent in the current regime whereby there is huge variability in standards between Local Authorities in key areas (fire cover standards, staffing levels, building control and licensing enforcement, community fire safety, health and safety, training, basic equipment etc) must be dealt with. The current system whereby there are no norms, where no agreed common processes exist and wherein there is no monitoring of compliance and performance is not, we believe, a sustainable proposition into the future in this critical safety field. It is clear that investment and change at the local level alone will not deal with the unacceptable situation which currently exists.
- The current regime in Ireland for the determination of standards of fire cover is now out-moded by reference to international trends and best practice. The system used by fire authorities is based very much on applying generic categories of risk (crude A to E or 1 to 5 scales) and then setting Pre-Determined Attendances (PDAs) for each category (i.e. setting the length of time to reach the incident – speed of response – and

the number/type of appliances and manpower to deal with the incident – weight of response). Most European and developed countries have now moved, or are now in the process of moving, to a risk-based approach to determining fire cover. The risk-based approach is a much more structured methodology for determining fire cover which examines in detail the risks in an area and takes into account a wide variety of variables such as population density, types and uses of buildings, in-built engineered fire safety solutions, access, topography, potential for spread of fire, other risks (factories, hazardous substances etc). It essentially seeks to develop a risk profile of the area and to determine fire and emergency cover based on the risk profile. With the massive changes which have taken place in Ireland in relation to demographics, location of industry, changing types of industry, general planning and development by region, changes in patterns of living, work and leisure etc., we need to upgrade our current approach and to move to a risk-based approach for determining standards of fire cover. Such an approach needs to be led from the centre on a consistent national basis, to be applied locally and to be monitored centrally as regards compliance with minimum standards to ensure consistency of application.

- The overall role of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Major Emergency Planning and Management at national, regional and local level needs to be reviewed, not only to close off some inherent gaps in the current regime, but especially in the light of the post 11th September, 2001 scenario and the changes in overall emergency planning introduced by Government in response to that scenario. A re-think is needed, having regard to the Fire Services' existing and continuing brief as the "blue light" response. Given public confidence in them, we believe the Fire Services should have a coordination role both within the Local Authorities, and where appropriate in an inter-agency context. Assigning a coordination role does not mean that the Fire Services would take over or assume responsibilities of other sections or organisations. Rather, we see coordination as a distinct activity within emergency planning. The key issues to be dealt with in this area include a lack of national focus, coordination and response capability for incidents of a national scale requiring a "blue light" intervention, the need to move from a static (plan-based) approach to a dynamic (process-based) approach and the need to have a much more structured approach to key areas other than response such as hazard and risk identification (including scenario-based planning), prevention and mitigation programmes and more extensive exercising of preparedness including dealing with the development of core professional emergency planning and response competencies within the respective departments/agencies involved and with inter-agency coordination.
- The overwhelming concentration to date in the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime has been on the response capability. There needs to be a significant shift towards prioritisation of prevention and mitigation programmes in line with international best practice. In our view, the current structures, systems and procedures are major impediments to achieving such a shift. There is insufficient integration between the building control and Fire Services regimes, there is no statutory obligation on Fire Authorities to act in this area, the role of the National Safety Council is too removed from the policy and operational sides of the regime, there is a lack of resources to get

the job done and, on the whole, the regime has, to date, failed to prioritise prevention and mitigation. The result is that building control enforcement is weak, licensing and during performance inspection is not happening to the required degree, community fire safety programmes are not being implemented in any developed way and available resources in the full-time and retained Fire Service, which could take on a greater role in this area, are being under-utilised.

- Morale within the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime is low. Leaving aside issues of pay and related conditions of service, which fall outside the scope of this Review, there is a significant human resource and people development agenda which has taken off internationally in line with best practice but which has yet to be addressed in any structured and systematic manner here in Ireland. The problems which are in urgent need of attention include the poorly developed career structures for Fire Service personnel which are contributing to difficulties in the retention of talent at all levels, the unnecessary barriers to promotion, the need to move to a competency-based regime for recruitment, retention and career progression providing equal opportunities for all, the need to mainstream health and safety as a key issue for Fire-fighters given the environment in which they work, the lack of uniformity and investment in training (including differences between Fire Authorities and between full-time and retained personnel) and the need to tackle the equality agenda. In our view, a concerted programme of affirmative action to deal with the developmental HR agenda, including the addressing, inter alia, of the problems outlined above, has enormous potential for ameliorating the rather adversarial and difficult industrial relations climate which has bedevilled the Fire Service over the years. Restrictive practices and inflexibility arising from this adversarial IR agenda are potentially significant barriers to enhancing the current regime.
- There is a dearth of quality research, trend analysis and statistical information within the system as already highlighted in Section 3 above. As a result, it is difficult to carry out comparative analysis work. It is also very difficult to develop a strong social and economic case for investment in Fire Safety and Fire Services. For example, there are no definitive fire death statistics (there are only statistics for incidents to which the Fire Service responds), information on non-fatal fire injuries is extremely patchy, there is no reliable information on the causes of fire, there is no available assessment of the cost of damage by fire and no information on the savings accruing from Fire Service intervention. Effectively, incidents are treated as isolated events with little or no trend analysis or accumulated learning emerging. However, such statistical information as is available clearly indicates that, by reference to international comparators, Ireland does not perform particularly well. The number of fire deaths per annum, especially in domestic fire situations, places us at the upper end of the spectrum on that parameter. In addition, the per capita spend on Fire Services in Ireland is at the lower end of the spectrum by international standards. This latter phenomenon is true even when allowance is made for the demographic and typographic nature of our country, with our per capita spend, for example, being lower than that in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These performance metrics, and those set out earlier in our report, while obviously not in themselves conclusive, indicate, it seems to us, that the

problems identified in the current regime are not issues which can be lightly dismissed nor are they amenable to simplistic solutions. Against this background while, as stated, there is no need to raise unnecessary public fears, there is also, quite clearly, no scope for complacency. We do not believe that the current regime would stand up favourably under the inevitable scrutiny and investigation which would follow a major fire or other major emergency incident with multiple casualties. Given the exposures involved, it is, we believe, fortunate that this Strategic Review is not being undertaken against the background of any particular major tragic incident or disaster.

4.10 In the light of the foregoing considerations, we believe that the major areas requiring improvement include:

- The overall level of investment in Fire Safety and Fire Services.
- The structures at central and local level.
- The regime for determining fire cover standards.
- The arrangements at national, regional and local level for Major Emergency Planning and Management.
- Enhanced programmes in the areas of prevention and mitigation.
- The Human Resource Management agenda.
- Research and Development.

4.11 We now turn, in the remaining paragraphs of this Section to our more detailed findings and conclusions under the headings set out in Paragraph 2.4 of our Terms of Reference. In most instances, our more detailed findings and conclusions serve to underpin our views on the strategic problems highlighted above.

The Legislative Frameworks

4.12 The legislative frameworks governing the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime have been set out earlier in this report and essentially arise under the following headings:

- The provision of emergency response Fire Services essentially governed by the Fire Services Act, 1981.
- The general area of fire and related safety matters mainly covered by the Building Control Act, 1990 and also by the Fire Services Act, 1981.
- The area of Major Emergency Management for which there is no definitive primary legislation.
- Licensing for which there are various existing and planned statutory provisions.
- Other related statutory obligations e.g. in relation to Dangerous Substances etc.

4.13 Major improvements have been brought about in the overall legislative frameworks since the last major review of Fire Safety and Fire Services. However, further improvement is required under each of the headings set out above.

4.14 The major issues which require to be dealt with under the Fire Services Act, 1981 are as follows:

- While the regime provides for Local Authorities (Fire Authorities) to determine needs and provide fire cover / response capability, it does so in general terms only. There are no set standards or processes by which this should be done nor is there any provision for performance monitoring / compliance in that regard. The result is that there is considerable variability in how Fire Authorities go about the business of determining requirements and in the standards of fire cover provided. There is also no real accountability since the Local Authorities which determine resource allocations (other than capital) are also the Fire Authorities with no third-party performance monitoring / compliance auditing taking place.
- All legal powers and duties are assigned to the Fire Authorities. Such delegation as exists within the system is to City / County Managers who may then further delegate to Local Authority officials. There is no systematic regime, therefore, of automatic empowerment of Chief Fire Officers, nor of Fire Service personnel, to act as authorised officers in carrying out functions under Section 18 (building safety) or Section 24 (licensing) of the Act. There is also a considerable resource problem in this area (see later).
- The regime lacks flexibility. It would benefit from being brought more into line with the Safety, Health and Welfare Act, 1989 provisions which provide for a range of interventions e.g. improvement notices, variable fines, prohibition notices etc. The issue of on-the-spot fines should also be examined.
- There is no statutory obligation on Fire Authorities to carry out fire safety programmes and this, we believe, is indicative of an overall lack of emphasis on prevention and mitigation which influences a lack of resource allocation to these important areas.

4.15 The most significant issues which need to be dealt with under the **Building Control Act, 1990** are as follows:

- The Building Control Act, 1990 makes general provision for building regulations and their enforcement in Parts A to M. In all Local Authorities, the Fire Safety Certification regime (Part B) comes within the ambit of the Fire Service. In some Local Authorities, other parts of the Building Control Act, 1990 or indeed all parts of the Act, are assigned to the Fire Service. The practice varies from one Local Authority to another.
- We found that, in general, priority is given to the processing of applications for Fire Safety Certificates. Inspections under the Fire Services Act, 1981 and in relation to Parts, other than Part B, of the Building Control Act 1990 are not prioritised, do not have adequate resources devoted to them and, as a result, even fairly minimal targets for inspection and enforcement are not being achieved.
- Because different organisational models and regimes operate in different Local Authorities, there is, in our view, insufficient coordination and interaction between the application of the Fire Services Act, 1981 and the Building Control Act, 1990. This is further compounded by the variability in practice on the ground in terms of interaction with the planning process as provided for under Section 13 of the Fire Services Act, 1981.

4.16 The main legislative issue to be dealt with in relation to **Major Emergency Management** is the lack of specific primary legislation to underpin the regime other than the response phase, where Section 25 of the Fire Services Act applies. Indeed, with the advent of the proposed Civil Defence Bill, it is likely that there will shortly be legislation underpinning the role and operation of the second-line emergency response regime while the first-line and primary, major emergency management regime remains without such legislative underpinning. The consequences of a lack of a legislative framework, apart from there not being clear assignment of coordination roles, is that little or no budgetary provision is made for any phase of emergency management, and the area receives little or no attention in a context of competing priorities. While necessary and pragmatic steps to improve the current regime are being, and can be, made by Government decision, Ministerial Orders and Statutory Instruments, we have become increasingly convinced, that the emergence of a coherent, integrated and effective major emergency management regime in Ireland would be greatly facilitated by primary legislation which would clearly and unequivocally assign responsibility, authority and accountability for the different aspects of the regime.

4.17 In relation to the **licensing** regime, the issues under Section 24 of the Fire Services Act, 1981 in relation to empowerment and authorisation have already been highlighted. Similar issues arise in relation to other existing legislation e.g. the Licensing Acts, etc. However, greater clarity and a better enforcement focus is evident in proposed and newer legislation such as that envisaged for indoor event licensing and outdoor event licensing (in effect since March 2001). The overwhelming issue in relation to licensing, however, continues to be the low level of enforcement activity, which arises from a combination of too few resources and an inability to deploy a greater number of full-time and retained Fire Service personnel to such duties.

4.18 There are finally, under this heading, a number of **miscellaneous legislative** issues which need to be dealt with as follows:

- There is a lack of clarity in relation to the operation of the Fire Service and the Health and Safety Authority in relation to fire safety at work. A draft memorandum of understanding has been drawn up. However, further work is required to set out more clearly respective roles, responsibilities, authority levels, coordination/cooperation arrangements and accountabilities.
- In a similar vein, there is a range of EU directives and other measures in relation to hazardous material / dangerous substances and including the licensing/inspection of fuel stations, stores etc. where greater clarity is needed on the Fire Service role and where inspection/enforcement activity is currently too low.

Major Emergency Management

4.19 The role of the Fire Service in MEM has been outlined in Chapter 2. Recent events internationally emphasise the necessity of preparedness for major emergencies. The following are our main findings and conclusions in relation to the role of the Fire Service in MEM:

- The framework and model of the existing plans as developed in the mid 1980s are fundamentally sound. A number of issues do need to be considered regarding the actual activation, implementation, exercising and scope of the plans, which are no longer wholly consistent with current international best practices.
- While the roles of the main emergency services are well defined, some gaps exist in core major emergency competencies. Major emergency management is an area requiring specialist, professional as well as inter-agency coordination skills. Such skills need to be further developed in all of the front line emergency services and at national level. It is vital that major emergency plans provide, not only for as wide a number of disaster and crisis scenarios as possible, but also for those circumstances which require a response beyond the existing skills and capabilities of the main emergency services. Current plans are overly concerned with the mobilisation and logistical procedures in the event of a major emergency.
- Fortunately, there has been little experience of major emergencies in Ireland in recent times. However, while there is a theoretical understanding of emergency planning in the Fire Service, there is a lack of both the practical expertise and experience that exists among Fire Service personnel and at national coordination level in other countries, such as The Netherlands.
- The current level of training is too infrequent and inconsistent to ensure that emergency personnel and ancillary services are adequately prepared to deal with a major emergency given turnover levels of staff in key positions. There is a clear need for practical and repeated training to be coordinated between all of the main and associated emergency services likely to be involved in the event of a major emergency.
- While the existing emergency plans and their provisions for the coordination of the Fire Services at a local level are sufficient, there is no process to adequately scale-up a response on a regional or national level or to sustain operations over a long period. Given the experience in other countries, we believe that, by definition, a regional or national level capability is required to support local response efforts. Furthermore there are no adequate off-site management facilities, which can be used to centrally collate information and provide news to the media. This could result in increasing fragmentation of operational information and response capability as relevant feedback is communicated from the local to the national level within the internal hierarchies of the partner emergency services. A core permanent cadre of professional skills needs to be developed at national level with access to appropriate facilities.

- Domestic and international experience demonstrates that major emergencies, by their very nature, can extend beyond administrative boundaries and may require the involvement of response services from numerous geographical and administrative areas. Existing provisions for this are not sufficient. Inconsistent and restricted geographical boundaries between core MEM response services present logistical challenges at regional and national level. The absence of a statutory basis for emergency planning has prevented the provision of budgeting and adequate training and equipment for potential disasters from being prioritised.
- Furthermore, under existing arrangements, there are no financial provisions made for dealing with costs arising from either disaster response or relief or recovery from major incidents at either local or national level. While Local Authorities are empowered to spend, they need to know that costs incurred will be recouped when the crisis has passed.
- Under current developments, the Department of Defence has an overseeing role over emergency planning in Ireland. However, the existing high number of Authorities and agencies involved in emergency planning will make it difficult for the Department of Defence to fulfil this role.

4.20 In summary, therefore, our views on the main areas for improvement in relation to Major Emergency Management are:

- Major Emergency Management is an area requiring specialist skills. The present regime does not adequately provide for the development and retention of those skills, particularly at national level, and there is no central repository for continuity in that regard.
- There is a need to migrate our framework approach to one which is based on more in-depth scenario planning, process development and dynamic roll-over using more frequent training / skills development and exercising. There also needs to be a greater emphasis on prevention / mitigation in relation to MEM.
- Improved arrangements are needed to provide for the management and coordination of major emergencies requiring a "blue light" response at national and regional levels.

International Best Practice Benchmarking

4.21 Throughout, the Review process has been informed, in so far as possible, by international best practice. However, there are two important limitations on the overall usefulness, from a strategic perspective, of some of the international research undertaken by us. First, meta-analyses of Fire Services internationally are not widely available which makes both comparisons and the identification of "best practices" difficult. Second, because Services in different countries grew out of different sets of circumstances and have different resource bases and infrastructures, developments elsewhere do not always "fit" easily with the context and culture of the Irish Service. Despite these limitations, there is scope and potential for learning from abroad. We have conducted an in-depth Review of the relevant literature, which, together with our consultations with international experts and our visits to the Netherlands and the UK, has informed our thinking on relevant best practices

internationally. Our findings, relate, in particular, to leadership and co-ordination at national level and to the range and delivery of functions falling under the Fire Service's remit in other jurisdictions.

4.22 The key points arising are listed below:

- While local delivery is a typical feature of the Service internationally, in most jurisdictions, a central unified coordinating structure, inspectorate function and strong national leadership usually accompanies the local delivery model.
- Internationally, there is generally greater co-ordination between the emergency services. For example, the Public Order and Safety Division of the Department of Home Affairs in The Netherlands holds overall responsibility for co-ordination and control of the Fire Services, as well as holding responsibility for the Police Service and for the provision of safety information. The Scottish Executive Justice Department is a new Department with responsibility for the Police and Fire Services and in Northern Ireland, the Department of Social Services and Public Safety's remit covers the provision of Ambulance and Fire Services and the preparedness of the health, social and Fire Services to deal with major incidents.
- Fire-fighters are involved in a range of prevention activities in a number of European countries; The Netherlands, Luxembourg, France and Finland for example, all utilise Fire-fighters in a range of prevention related activities including, building control, technical control teaching, and the maintenance of fire-technical equipment for purposes other than the Fire Service.
- While the number of inhabitants and attendance times are important criteria in the determination of the location of fire stations, virtually all European countries also employ a criterion related to the determination of assessed risk. In addition, in many countries e.g. Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Finland, France, Norway, Poland, etc., levels of operational staffing, vehicles and minimum equipment are prescribed by law.
- In most EU member states, there is an organisation, usually at least part-funded by the Exchequer, which conducts research and development into fire trends, causation, new fire-fighting techniques, equipment, and fire and smoke dynamics.
- In other countries, the equality agenda has much higher priority than in Ireland. While the Irish Service has yet to resolve the gender imbalance across the Service, other countries are developing programmes to deal with ethnicity and multiculturalism with the aim of opening up the Service to a wider range of people.
- Many countries, despite changed economic circumstances, have successfully adapted their Fire Services such that a volunteer or retained element continues to be an important factor in their delivery.

Balance between Prevention and Response

4.23 The culture and historic focus of the Irish Fire Service has been on fighting fires. International best practice now demonstrates that increased involvement in prevention and mitigation and ensuring that the public is aware of risks and ways of minimising them is far more effective in saving and protecting people and property. Our analysis of the balance and integration of these activities in the Irish context is outlined below:

- Of the total number of staff involved in the delivery of Fire Services in Ireland (3,189 in 1999) 95 per cent are primarily employed to fight fires and respond to other emergencies. The remaining 5 per cent concentrate on prevention activities, which currently is primarily the desk-based exercise of certifying new build designs for fire safety.
- The existing split of "operations" and "prevention" and current deployment practice makes it difficult to involve Fire-fighters in any real way in prevention activities such as community fire safety.
- This separation has knock-on implications for the structure and management of the Fire Service and is demonstrated by the confinement, in the main, of fire prevention / safety activities to the Officer Corps.
- The fragmentation of responsibility for fire safety promotion between the National Safety Council (NSC) and the Fire Authorities has contributed to the imbalance in respect of fire safety and operational activities at Fire Authority level. While Fire Authorities are empowered under the legislation to give advice on fire safety matters, this generally occurs on a reactive basis in response to queries from the local community rather than as part of a programmatic community fire safety approach.
- While the Fire Safety Certificate process itself is valuable, its status as the primary prevention tool of most Authorities, and the form it takes, reinforce the notion that only a Senior Officer i.e. an Engineer can engage in fire prevention / safety activities.
- The logical linkage between fire prevention activities and operations in not made under the current system. For example, there is limited opportunity for Operational personnel / Fire-fighters to inform the fire prevention / safety process with their experience and similarly, Operational personnel do not have the benefit of the knowledge of the building stock collated by the fire prevention departments.
- Limited examples of targeted community safety activity, incorporating a fire safety element, were identified during the Review. However, very few of the people in attendance at the public consultation sessions could recall any national or local fire safety initiatives in the recent past other than activities conducted during Fire Safety Week.
- The target audience (hoteliers, guest house owners, nursing home owners, teachers, etc.) for the Fire Safety Guides were represented at most of the consultation sessions and in some cases were not aware of the availability of the Guides or how to go about putting the guidance into practice.
- There is, therefore, considerable scope for additional emphasis, focus and investment in prevention / mitigation activity.

- The public consultations also indicated that, while there is a willingness to play a greater role in minimising risks, the public simply do not know what risks to be mindful of, or what safety measures they should take. We are in no doubt that investing in education towards a proactive, self-protection culture, rather than creating passive victims is the approach required.

Maintaining and Developing Co-Ordinated and Sustainable Systems

4.24 Throughout the Review process, the primary focus was on exploring ways in which Fire Safety and Fire Services could be delivered in a more co-ordinated, efficient, manner amenable to effective performance management. The Review process also recognised that these services are delivered within a broader context as part of the Local Authority system, as a member of the broader family of emergency and safety interests and in cooperation with a wide variety of volunteer services. The roles of the Department of Environment and Local Government (DoELG), Fire Services Council (FSC) and NSC are considered in greater detail later. Our main findings and conclusions in relation to the role of Local Authorities are as follows:

Local Authorities

- The delegation of the effective responsibility for standards of service to Local Authorities causes a number of difficulties for Fire Service personnel and Local Authority management. Decisions around standards of fire cover, equipment standards, training programmes and many other key components of a Fire Service are made at local level. This places an enormous burden on local personnel to produce plans and specifications for a huge variety of aspects of the Service and then secure approval from various groups without any recognised national standards or processes of determination. This in turn, leads to variability and inconsistency in Fire Service provision from Authority to Authority. While there has been some improvement in recent times, these problems continue to have a negative impact on the local delivery of Fire Services. This situation is particularly acute in smaller Local Authorities.
- Fire Services, while part of the Local Authority system, have a relatively low profile within Local Authority structures. While Local Authority management in general refute claims that Fire Services are not central to the Local Authority, the widespread view of Fire Service personnel is one of disconnection and not being valued. This difficulty is compounded by the part-time status of some of the staff and the fact that in the nature of the service, much activity occurs outside office hours. In some cases, the lack of regular contact between Senior Officers and their brigades can also contribute to this sense of isolation. There is comparatively little staff transfer between the Fire Services section and other sections and in many cases the Fire Service's headquarters is located some physical distance from the Local Authority headquarters. These factors can result in a feeling of isolation amongst Fire Services personnel which is damaging to morale.

- The linkage between Fire Services and other relevant Local Authority functions such as building control, planning, etc, varies considerably between Authorities. A low level of connection and communication between the Fire Service and other sections has negative implications for the Fire Service including its ability to plan for fires (e.g. availability of water, access, etc) and level of knowledge about the building stock in the area. Conversely, a high level of communication greatly assists the fire safety work of the Fire Service and informs operational methods when required.

Partner Emergency Services

4.25 Partner emergency services and other safety interests are significant stakeholders in the delivery of the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime. These services have a critical role to play in the prevention, mitigation, response to or recovery from, incidents which involve the Fire Services. Examples of such services/organisations include the Gardaí, Health Boards/Authorities, the Health and Safety Authority, Civil Defence, the Railway Inspectorate and various Government Departments. Our main findings and conclusions in relation to how these organisations and the Fire Services cooperate to maintain and develop effective and sustainable systems of operation are as follows:

- While the roles of the various partner services are well understood in many circumstances, there is some lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities in specific areas such as fire safety at work, offshore fire-fighting and fire safety in prisons.
- Relationships at local level are generally very good, with high levels of cooperation and in many cases regular operational interaction. However, the regime for inter-agency training and participation in exercises needs to be improved.
- Relationships at national level are not well developed and there is a need for more formal arrangements with key partners. There is an absence of suitable memoranda of understanding clarifying roles and responsibilities and a lack of interagency integration in planning and policy development.

The Voluntary Sector

4.26 Ireland has a significant volunteer emergency/rescue services sector comprised of committed and devoted members drawn principally from their local communities. While, in recent years, there is evidence of a marked decline in voluntarism, a large number of groups remain in existence. Activities range from Civil Defence to dog rescue groups and mountain rescue teams. In view of their numbers, local knowledge and specialist skills, it is vital that the Fire Services can work effectively with these groups. In general, voluntary groups are underutilised, as they are not well integrated with statutory emergency services. Our main findings and conclusions in relation to how the Fire Service interacts with these groups are as follows:

- Internationally, as a principle, volunteers are better harnessed and integrated into the mainstream emergency services than in Ireland. This integration is often facilitated in simple ways e.g. mobilisation and radio communication, accommodation for vehicles, use of stations for training etc.
- Voluntary groups in Ireland are not generally integrated into training programmes and other preparation. This leads to variability in the performance of groups as they are responsible for their own training regime which is often severely limited due to resource constraints. As a consequence, some Fire Service personnel are concerned about the quality of the services currently being offered by voluntary groups.
- The lack of integration into the Fire Services leads to many voluntary groups having independent facilities placing a further drain on their resources and inhibiting cooperation with the Fire Service.
- Volunteer services are rarely involved in the preparation of plans and/or policies setting out the Fire Services response to various scenarios, etc.
- Such lack of interaction in relation to training, location and planning inhibits the efficiency and effectiveness of the integration of volunteer services into an operational response.

Standards of Emergency Fire Cover

4.27 As described in Chapter 2, the term "Standards of Cover" is something of a misnomer in the Irish context. The current regime does not, in fact, prescribe actual standards of fire cover nor the processes by which they should be determined. In the current system, these matters are left to be determined by each Local Authority. Our analysis of the current situation is set out below:

- Difficulties are caused by the lack of national standards and leadership in this area. Performance management and resource allocation decisions are difficult to make in the absence of relevant and objective standards and processes.
- Variability in standards of cover, resources allocated, equipment availability and training is a major problem.
- The current regime does not adequately provide for the fundamental demographic changes which have occurred over recent years in Ireland's urban areas, the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and surrounding counties, and in other rural areas.

- The current system permits too much leeway for subjective, and in some cases ad hoc, assessment and interpretation of needs as regards response time, crew levels, appliances and equipment.
- Response to Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs) is not generally taken into account when planning Fire Cover Standards despite this being a major tasking for the Fire Service.
- On our behalf, Entec UK Ltd. conducted a review of Ireland's present approach to Emergency Fire Cover. Entec's review highlighted gaps under the Fire Services Act, 1981 which included the following:
  - Under the Act, provision is made for "prompt and efficient extinguishing of fires in buildings and other places of all kinds… protection and rescue of persons and property from injury by fire". However, no standard of time, weight of response or special services are provided for (rescues, RTA attendance, etc).
  - Unlike international exemplars, the UK, Australia, Sweden etc., there is no reference to the numbers of people likely to be affected by fire in a given area – this is particularly relevant in light of emerging population trends. In addition, standards elsewhere take account of capability of response i.e. what type of response Fire-fighters are capable of, with what equipment and within what timescales.
  - Historically, our approach to fire cover does not adequately reflect the nature of local risks and has been impaired by the lack of a legal obligation to ensure that local risks are monitored and adequately provided for. There is a need, in keeping with international best practice, to move to a risk-based approach to the determination of fire cover standards.
- The adoption of local risk assessment and the provision of the appropriate resources, crewing levels and competencies required to deal with the risks identified would also significantly enhance safety at work for Fire Service personnel.

Organisational Structures and Management Arrangements

4.28 It is perhaps understandable that there is some dissatisfaction with the organisational and management arrangements of a Service which originated in the 1940s and has not been reviewed for over 25 years. Difficulties with current organisational and management arrangements highlight a need to fundamentally reconfigure the current arrangements and to find a system which can better reconcile the need for local level service delivery with the requirement for strong national leadership. Current organisational arrangements are unnecessarily diffuse, with functions which should be operating in tandem to further the strategic development of the Service, fragmented across a range of bodies, (DoELG, 37 Fire Authorities, FSC, NSC, etc). The difficulties caused by the current arrangements are as follows:

- The apportionment of responsibility for different functions across a variety of bodies combined with a degree of ambiguity in the legal framework, e.g. in relation to MEM, means that there is a lack of accountability and performance management.

- The lack of national leadership in the form of a body that could set and audit standards has meant that, with some exceptions, the Service is regarded, (internally at least), as having an unjustifiably low profile within the Local Authority system and is forced to 'compete' with other, non-comparable services falling under the Local Authority's remit.
- Different organisational and reporting arrangements for Chief Fire Officers exist between Local Authorities.
- There is a need for greater coordination between individual Fire Authorities. Whereas there are some services, those outlined under the Fire Service Act, etc, that belong at the local level, there are others, including training, mobilisation and communications that can be more expediently and economically delivered at regional level. Similarly, while current inter-county arrangements such as the Section 59 Agreements and the Regional Accident Prevention Committees are working well, there is a requirement for greater regional coordination if these initiatives are to be sustained in the longer term.
- In a number of counties, the Fire Service appears to be on the periphery of the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) agenda. However, we would be reluctant to draw any conclusions from this at this stage, as we understand that arrangements are currently being finalised.
- Despite, or perhaps because of, the fragmentation of the current system, there are a number of organisational gaps and a number of functions which are currently underdeveloped. MEM is one which has already been highlighted. For example, the role previously discharged in this area by County Engineers as Controllers of Operations has not yet been formally reallocated.
- The absence of a specific R&D function under the current regime has meant that the Service cannot contribute to the development of best practices to ensure more effective service delivery as regards incident investigation, new approaches to service delivery, addressing new risks or ensuring that the investment in equipment for specialist and mainstream risks results in an optimum return. R&D is better developed in most European countries where it is either carried out by the Fire Service directly or by the relevant Civil Protection Institute / Authority.
- The evolution of Fire Services in other countries highlights the fact that the prevention / operations split in the Irish Service, as an approach to management, is outdated and cannot easily accommodate the development of new functions such as Community Fire Safety etc.
- While there are undoubtedly tasks and roles within the Fire Service which require specific skill-sets and corresponding academic training, the current two-tier system has caused a number of difficulties within the Service. First, the vast majority of Fire-fighters regard the current system as an arbitrary means of excluding the operational side of the Service from senior managerial positions. Second, there is a lack of confidence in the capability of newer Senior Officers to take control at the scene of a fire given the limited nature of their operational experience and training. Finally, there is a sense that under the current system, Senior Officers and Fire-fighters have

very different perceptions of the Fire-fighting role and this has perpetuated and compounded a range of IR difficulties.

- Through participation in the officer roster, Senior Officers play a crucial role in emergency response. At present however, there is little evidence of a structure to support them in this role. As a result, in some instances this has lead to inappropriate diffusion of responsibility across the Fire-fighting ranks.
- Effective leadership is at the heart of successful emergency operations. At present, there is no culture of reflection or learning from incidents and command systems largely because the necessary Management Information Systems (MIS) and other support structures do not exist to enable this to happen on a systematic basis.
- There is a lack of clarity about how and where specialist or technical information can be accessed. National organisations have found that they receive different levels of response to requests for advice on prevention from different Fire Authorities and have reported that they have been given contrary advice by different Fire Authorities.

Funding Arrangements – Revenue and Capital

4.29 Our research highlighted a number of issues in relation to the current funding of the Fire Service which impact negatively on service delivery and are likely to inhibit further development. Before moving to a discussion of current arrangements, it is worth examining some more generally relevant issues as regards the costs of the Service:

- Total expenditure on the Fire Service has almost doubled in the last five years. Local Authority managers point to escalating costs and the percentage of their overall budget spent on Fire Services. However, in the absence of any definable standards or any developed performance measurement regime, it is difficult to assess the added value / additional return to the Local Authority or to the State on this investment. In essence, while recognising the current deficiencies in arrangements, there would appear to be no sound economic or social underpinning for investment in the Fire Service.
- There is significant variability in the cost of the Fire Service at local level ranging (in general) from 3 per cent to 8 per cent of total spending depending on the Authority involved. Costs are escalating in this regard largely due to improvements in pay and conditions of service. There is a considerable challenge to be faced in ensuring added value from the escalating costs involved.
- Increases in capital funding in recent years are to be welcomed. While such increases are bringing about improvements in the infrastructure of the Service (buildings and equipment), the lack of delegation within the system means that the approval mechanisms remain slow and cumbersome.
- Unlike the community service charges generally levied by Local Authorities for refuse collection, etc., Fire Service charges are related to individual incidents and services. Huge differences of opinion exist on charging for incident related services. Fears were expressed that old age pensioners would choose not to call their local Fire Brigades in the fear that they would not be able to meet any subsequent bills. Despite the existence of waiver systems for many such groups there is little information and much confusion and folklore on the topic.

- The charges actually levied can vary hugely depending on location. Ranging from flat rate charges e.g. IR£100/ 127 for attendance at a chimney fire to thousands of pounds where charges are calculated on the basis of actual time spent on the incident ground. On examination of the figures, our best estimate based on the information available, indicates that charges account for less than 4 per cent (on average) of the total cost of the Service. The collection and recovery of charges levied is actually lower.
- Although the Minister has responded to, and addressed, calls for extra resources by increasing the fee for Fire Safety Certificates, in the majority of cases the extra revenue earned is not being ring-fenced for the Fire Service or the Building Control Section. Similarly, where individual Fire Departments discharge other building control functions, monies raised are channelled back into the general funds of the Local Authority system. There is huge potential to make the fire safety activities of the individual Fire Authorities self-financing, by charging the sectors who benefit from the work.
- The yearly basis for budgeting, both state and local is unsatisfactory, as it does not lend itself to a programmatic approach for the development of various aspects of the Service. In the absence of any system of devolved budgets there is little flexibility in the delivery of the day-to-day service.
- The insurance industry is, in many cases, the main beneficiary of Fire Service activities and needs to be brought further into the loop as regards contributing to the cost.
- In general, we would concur with the findings of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Unit in the DoELG as regards the limited potential for the use of PPPs in the Fire Service as a whole. The standardised nature of fire stations and the modest scale of the investment involved render these projects unattractive to the private sector. Although some scope might exist in respect of communication centres and regional training centres, as this infrastructure is already largely developed, the potential is minimal. A more co-ordinated approach to the procurement of fire appliances and equipment will, however provide benefits including cost savings. There are, for example, early indications that central procurement arrangements are working well in the UK.

The Department's Overseeing Role

4.30 The role of the DoELG is central to the current operation of the Fire Service. At present, the Department's role, as described in Chapter 2, centres on the provision of the legislative framework for Fire Safety and Fire Services together with a development programme and the provision of capital funding to Fire Authorities. Our main findings and conclusions in relation to the role of the Department are as follows:

- The confinement of the Department's role to one of oversight and policy provision leads to an inadequate level, or absence in some cases, at national level of more practical assistance in relation to guidelines, templates, best practice processes and standards.

- In practice, the relationship between the Department and the Fire Authorities can be very ambiguous. It can range from being very controlling in regard to detailed matters of capital funding to very distant when it comes to standards and operational matters.
- The process of deciding on capital allocations for fire appliances and other appropriate expenditure lacks transparency and is unduly cumbersome.
- While the Department has produced a series of useful guidance documents for premises owners etc. over the last decade, there is evidence of a lack of awareness of this material amongst the target audiences. It is difficult for the Department under current arrangements to fulfil the role of national leader / focus point for Fire Services. The current arrangements do not adequately provide for integrated leadership nor for overall performance management of the regime.

Role of the Fire Services Council (FSC) and National Safety Council (NSC)

4.31 In addition to the DoELG, Local Authorities, Fire Services, partner emergency services, safety interests and volunteer groups, the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime is heavily influenced by the work of two other statutory bodies: the FSC and the NSC. The role of both organisations has been outlined in Chapter 2. In view of the importance of these roles, a key requirement of the Review was to consider the performance of these organisations in relation to the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime.

FSC

4.32 Our main findings and conclusions in relation to the FSC are as follows:

- Local Authorities are very appreciative of the assistance from the FSC in the provision of training and regard the impact of training as having greatly enhanced the capability of the Fire Services.
- The FSC's budget, at approximately IR£326,000 / 414,020 plus provision for staff and accommodation (2001), is extremely limited for an organisation providing services to 37 Fire Authorities with more than 3,000 staff. The FSC has operated on a very "tight" basis using Fire Service Officers as Instructors for its courses. Although this arrangement has generally worked well it has placed huge demands on some Officers, and relies on voluntary cooperation.
- The FSC's focus is on the training and education element of its remit to the exclusion of a number of other roles prescribed under Section 16 of the Fire Service Act, 1981, such as the provisions for the conduct of research and investigations. While the current level of funding would make an expansion of roles difficult, the dearth of quality research in the area of Fire Safety and Fire Services is conspicuous.
- Furthermore, while the FSC has focused on the education and training area, it is primarily concerned with Officer training and therefore does not engage directly with the majority of Fire Service personnel.
- The FSC provides a programme of training. However, it has no input into who is nominated to receive training. Furthermore, the FSC cannot ensure that the training provided to participants will be utilised on their return to their individual Fire

Authorities. As such, there is no assurance that full benefit is derived from the training provided.

- The composition of the Council has been criticised as unrepresentative and out of line with recent practice in the formation of similar Councils. At present, it is unclear whether the Council is a representative or an expert body.
- The FSC is led, on a part-time basis, by a Principal Officer provided by the DoELG who acts as the Chief Executive. While this arrangement appears to be sufficient for the current level and type of activity, it would be unsustainable in the event of any increased level of activity.

NSC

4.33 Our main findings and conclusions in relation to the NSC are as follows:

- The core focus of the NSC is on road safety awareness. While this is entirely understandable in view of the organisation's funding arrangements and the respective number of fatalities, it nevertheless raises the issue of the need for focus on fire safety issues. The NSC has no personnel specifically dedicated to fire duties. It is notable in this regard that, while the NSC was responsible for water safety awareness when established, this responsibility has been transferred to a specialist water safety body.
- The need for specialist fire safety awareness personnel is particularly pressing due to the centrality of community fire safety promotion and awareness in international best practice in fire safety and prevention as demonstrated in the UK and other EU countries.
- The absence of a National Fire Safety Strategy with set targets and milestones similar to those contained in the Road to Safety Strategy has contributed to a lack of focus at national level about what the mission and objectives of the Fire Service should be.
- The insurance industry's contribution to the NSC's work in the fire safety awareness area is widely regarded as exceptionally low in view of the benefit the industry derives from effective fire safety practices. Increased funding would enable the conduct of research and trends analysis which would, in turn, underpin an effective performance management system in relation to fire prevention and fire safety.
- The separation of statutory Fire Safety functions from the actual delivery of Fire Services does not, we believe, represent the optimum model for the future.

4.34 In summary, both the FSC and NSC do valuable work to the extent that it is possible within their existing structural and funding arrangements. However, because of limitations in both these areas, neither organisation has realised its full potential with regard to Fire Safety and Fire Services. Furthermore, while not the fault of either organisation, the existence of separate organisations with separate remits continues the pattern of fragmentation within the Fire Service which already exists at national and local levels.

International Dimensions and Relationships in Fire and Civil Protection

4.35 The Fire Service operates in an increasingly global environment, and has obligations in relation to international shipping and aircraft, Seveso II plants, the increasing number of multinationals with flag- ship plants located in Ireland, and large numbers of non-nationals temporarily or permanently resident in Ireland. The international dimension of its work is, therefore, significant. The following points summarise our findings and conclusions with regard to this important issue:

- At a strategic level, Ireland is involved in a number of initiatives. For example, an Assistant Secretary of the Department currently represents Ireland as the Director General for Civil Protection and a Principal Officer is on the Permanent Network of National Correspondents (PNCC). The Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section of the DoELG has also been involved in a number of European fora to advance fire safety and civil protection across Europe.
- The increasing levels of international contact in the Civil Protection sphere have been of benefit to Ireland. However, there is a dearth of international interaction in relation to operational best practice and innovation, and as an aspect of overall career progression and in respect of information sharing, research and development.
- International cooperation is essentially due to the EU Standards harmonisation process and the need for Ireland to be represented at the international level.
- In respect of cross-border arrangements, there is the Fire Services Cross Border Working Group to facilitate greater cooperation and information exchange.

Other Related Issues

4.36 In accordance with the Terms of Reference, we have examined a range of other issues which are pertinent to the delivery and development of the Service. Our findings and conclusions in relation to each of these issues are documented in the paragraphs which follow.

Mobilisation / Communications and IT

4.37 Our analysis of the current situation with regard to the use of IT in the Fire Safety and Fire Services is set out below:

- While the application of IT to the delivery of Fire Services is viewed enthusiastically by most Fire Authorities, the lack of common focus and the need for each Authority to deal directly through their own Local Authority for funding, approval and support significantly dissipates this enthusiasm.
- Overall, the use of IT is largely driven by each individual brigade seeking resources from their Local Authority to implement solutions that they see as important. In keeping with other areas, this function has tended to be approached on a piecemeal basis.
- While, under the CAMP project, considerable effort and investment has gone into designing and implementing comprehensive mobilisation communications infrastructures in each region, other potential applications have had little serious consideration.

- GIS (Geographical Information Systems) is regarded by many as a key technology that has not yet been exploited by the Service. GIS has evolved in the past few years from being an inaccessible, expensive technology to being available and affordable for a wide variety of applications.
- The application of GIS has been assessed by some Local Authorities but is far from being applied on a day-to-day basis in areas such as aiding the locating of incidents, route planning and demographic analysis. Those regions which have explored the potential of GIS believe strongly in its benefits.
- In some cases, textual descriptions of directions from the station to the incident address are stored against addresses and can be relayed to the driver of the responding vehicle. However, finding the incident is largely the responsibility of the appliance driver. Where available, these descriptions only cover directions from the primary pre-determined attendance station. It has also proved difficult to keep these up-to-date due to road network changes, including new roads, one-way streets etc. There has been little consideration of employing automated route planning and traffic systems taking into account real time inhibitors e.g. traffic conditions. Having a full GIS system in place would greatly assist in this regard.
- Extensive address databases were implemented as part of the CAMP project, at which stage no national address database was available. Although some Authorities are now aware of the availability of a national address database (i.e. An Post's Geo Directory), its adoption as a standard has, as yet, only been considered in a few cases. There is some concern as to its completeness in rural areas and its ability to deal with local knowledge of place names and area boundaries.
- The local address databases, which are used to determine the location of a fire/incident are maintained and updated by each Fire Authority for addresses in its jurisdiction. This involves considerable administrative effort across the country and each Authority defines its own standards of how addresses are stored. Problems can be encountered in relation to differences in local place names, spelling of addresses, Irish language place names and other searching anomalies. These are largely left up to the operators to sort out.
- Although the use of Caller ID for landline calls and GPS (Global Positioning Systems) positioning for mobile calls is recognised as having potential for quickly identifying and verifying the location of incidents, and indeed assisting in identifying potential bogus calls, this is not permitted under current data protection legislation.
- Considerable scope exists for greater use of IT in the preparation of pre-fire plans which, at present, are mostly word-processed documents. In addition, there are no linkages between the address databases used in mobilisation, the reporting of incidents and the original pre-fire plans.
- There is little or no use of Vehicle Mobile Data Systems (VMDS) to provide access to Chemdata or pre-fire plan information in the appliances themselves. However, there has been some pilot testing of ruggedised PCs for mobile data. Some regions have also piloted fax machines on board the appliance connected via Eircell's GSM network. These have been used to send pre-fire plans to appliances deployed to incidents and have been reasonably successful in this regard.

- There is no system of Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) using GPS technology to identify appliances deployed on a previous incident that may be re-routed to other incidents.
- The **Diamond** system which is used by most Authorities to manage the processing of planning applications, licence applications, fire safety certificate applications, building inspections etc. has only been implemented in some Authorities. There is, however, no integration between this and the address databases used in mobilisation or other Local Authority data sets. In addition, the collection of monies and payments reconciliation in relation to licence applications remains largely a manual process across the Service.
- There have been attempts to standardise the format of fire reports and a common national format has recently been agreed. Prior to this, each Fire Authority tended to have its own report format. Some counties have implemented simple MS Access systems to record and store these details. However, there are no linkages between fire reports and the associated premises record in the command and control databases. Some consideration has been given to the provision of fire reports over the internet in order to facilitate online completion.
- There is little uniformity with regard to the provision of management information and statistical analysis of incident data, mainly due to the lack of a standard structure for warehousing this data. Generally, data feeds are extracted from central CAMP databases and are sent to local centres where local Fire Service personnel generate their own reports on these standalone data sets. There is also a lack of standardisation with regard to the identification of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for reporting purposes. The result is that overall national reports and statistics are difficult to compile, are delivered late, and are of limited use for meaningful analysis.
- A few Authorities have piloted the use of GIS to enable demographic analysis of the results incorporating the relevant KPIs. This requires the linkage of incidents back to geographical positions to allow the details to be graphically represented in a map format.
- There is no standard electronic means of capturing details on personnel e.g. personal information, training, medical history, disciplinary details etc. Separate records tend to be maintained by both the brigades and the Local Authorities. In some cases, simple MS Access databases are used to store details. The inability to associate the information captured from the fire report and other incident data back to Fire-fighters training, skills and past experience details has been identified as an issue which now needs to be addressed.
- Systems used for management and administrative functions are mainly supplied through the Local Authorities and currently do not accommodate specific Fire Authority issues and nuances including, for example, the calculation of shift and other allowances, reporting capabilities with regard to payroll costs and systems for rostering of crews. There is also a lack of a systematic approach to vehicle maintenance planning and cost control and the development of specific budget models for the Fire Authorities.

Training and Education

4.38 In September 2001, the FSC completed a review of the Training Report first submitted to the Minister in 1990. In general our findings concur with those of the FSC. Below we have highlighted the key issues in respect of training and education of relevance to this Review:

- Available local resources and practice dictate that standards of instruction and the amount of time spent training varies significantly throughout the country. The training provided by the FSC is generally regarded as being of good quality. However, there is insufficient supply and in some instances, it is failing to address the real needs of some of the Brigades. Calls for more in-depth training needs analysis are therefore being made. The absence of a structured modular approach and uniform application of yearly minimum levels of training needs to be addressed.
- The absence of any developed national or regional arrangements for training provision has resulted in a number of anomalies and frustrations with the Service. Some Fire Authorities feel that they are essentially subsidising other Authorities through the provision of facilities and instructors etc. and, in times of staff and other shortages, that this is not sustainable. The various approaches to where and when, and indeed, what, training personnel receive is further evidenced by some Authorities choosing to send their personnel abroad for training i.e. to the UK at huge cost to the Local Authority.
- The training of Fire Service personnel is not integrated into any form of national accreditation system. The issue of certification of training is becoming increasingly important in the context of an international trend towards a competency-based approach to training and certification.
- First responder training (at a minimum) should be considered for all fire-fighting personnel given the changing nature of their role and increasing requirement to attend incidents such as road traffic accidents. Specialist service training, tied-in with arrangements for developing specialist rescue teams, should also be considered.
- Senior Officer training is deficient, particularly in the operational area, and more specifically in command and control. This has been compounded by the two-tier system and the fact that a young Engineer with no operational experience, as a rostered Senior Officer, can be in charge on the incident ground.
- During the course of the Review, health and safety was an issue of enormous concern for Fire-fighters. The need to improve occupational health and safety for Fire-fighters has driven considerable change internationally. For example, the London Fire Brigade has embraced the “safe person / competent individual” concept. Overall, it would appear that the training regime in Ireland is concentrated on specific skills training as opposed to the development of competencies which would ensure that Fire-fighters can perform efficiently and safely.
- Cooperation and coordination with other / partner emergency services in respect of training and joint training exercises is poor in some quarters. Lack of resources and restrictive practices are some of the main reasons for lack of participation on the part of the Fire Service. More formalised arrangements and a more structured approach are needed.

- The two-tier / dual-entry system and the requirement that only technically qualified professionals can hold senior positions in the Service is one of the most debated issues within the Service. All efforts that have so far been made to eliminate glass ceilings have been narrowly focused on how to enable Fire-fighters, who wish to aspire to the top, to achieve the necessary engineering qualification. However, a more holistic approach to competency-based recruitment, retention and career progression is now required.

Appliance Fleet and Equipment

4.39 Our findings and conclusions in relation to appliance fleet and equipment are as follows:

- There are different profiles in terms of age and quality of appliances and equipment throughout the country. This trend started in the early 1990's when capital provision for appliances was significantly reduced. While the enhanced capital provisions in recent years are making inroads into the major task of upgrading fleet and equipment, much remains to be done in this area.
- Fire Service personnel drive fire appliances under their own private licences. In the event that an accident occurs, their licence (and, indeed, personal insurance cover) may be at risk. This issue will increase in importance with the introduction of the penalty points system in the near future. It is noteworthy that the Army provides for a separate employment-related driving licence.
- Strong arguments favouring a new approach to the provision of equipment can be derived from the difficulties caused by existing arrangements. Current difficulties include the lack of compatibility between equipment operated by different brigades, the purchase of unsuitable equipment in some Authorities and the absence of any register to underpin shared-use arrangements and reports.
- There is no programmatic approach for the replacement and upgrading of appliances and equipment. Coupled with the lack of a discernible approval process for new appliances and equipment, this has led to many frustrations. The approval process for the purchase of new appliances via the respective Local Authorities and the DoELG is regarded as an overly burdensome and slow process. The capacity of the equipment and appliance industries to deliver is also an issue.

Fire Stations / Property

4.40 Our findings and conclusions in relation to the status of fire stations / property are as follows:

- The situation has improved substantially with the recent upgrading and refurbishment of fire stations. However, there are still a large number of stations with less than satisfactory facilities. The enhanced programme of capital spending needs, therefore, to continue for the foreseeable future.

- There are significant difficulties with the funding and approval process for spending on fire stations. The current yearly basis does not lend itself to a programmatic approach. The length of time for all the stages of approval to be achieved appears excessive. In other instances, unnecessary costs are being carried at local level, not only in respect of time spent preparing proposals, but also as a result of having to employ and re-employ professional advisers, such as Architects. Work, which is currently ongoing, on developing a standard approach to the design and building of fire stations needs to be fast-tracked.
- The lack of a structural and systematic building/refurbishment programme and absence of any integration with planning activities for other resources has resulted, in some instances, in incompatibility between stations and tenders.

Recruitment, Staff Retention and Career Progression

4.41 Throughout the Review, a range of IR issues were raised which, as already noted, fall outside the scope of our Terms of Reference. However, some of our findings cannot be easily separated from the IR process. Recruitment, retention and career progression are closely related and the difficulties currently being experienced in these areas are a reflection of the more systemic problems highlighted elsewhere in this report.

Recruitment

4.42 In large urban areas where there are full-time employment prospects, there is a high level of interest in the Service, as indicated by the high number of responses to recruitment campaigns. The situation outside these areas is more varied. In areas where there is a high number of call-outs, and consequently a constant level of remuneration, recruitment is not a major problem. However, there are a number of reasons for the decline in interest which is particularly affecting the retained force in more rural areas, including the following:

- Low morale, limited career progression opportunities, occupational hazards, the poor condition of some stations and facilities, lack of a dress uniform (in some counties) and limited promotional opportunities combine to create a poor recruitment environment for a Service which relies so heavily on its human capital.
- Declining levels of "voluntarism" in society as a whole have obvious implications for a Service that grew out of a sense of duty to the local community. Throughout the country, we have heard that employers are increasingly reluctant to facilitate employee involvement in the retained service, particularly where stations have high annual call-out numbers. Labour mobility and the high cost of housing in the new commuter towns, mean that it is difficult to find sufficient numbers of suitable candidates who live and work within the required radius of retained stations. As a consequence, there are delays in filling vacancies and consequently added pressure on crews.
- On a practical level, there are still many stations, which do not have the necessary infrastructure, in terms of showers, bathrooms etc., to accommodate female recruits. The low numbers of female recruits is a problem we share with other jurisdictions but unlike other countries we do not have pro-active programmes designed to increase the number of females across the ranks.

- There is little systematic targeting of sources of potential recruits e.g. Civil Defence.
- The lack of flexibility in working arrangements is a major difficulty in the retained Service. Concepts such as "limited availability" and "day manning" arrangements need to be considered as mechanisms for making the Service more attractive to new entrants.

Staff retention

4.43 Key issues in relation to staff retention are as follows:

- If not yet a major problem, retention has been highlighted as a growing area of concern in certain parts of the Service. There is, for example, significant anecdotal evidence that newer recruits no longer regard the Service as offering a lifetime career. Many members of the retained service find the "24 hours a day, 365 days a year" commitment difficult to reconcile with work, family and social responsibilities. Turn-over rates are increasing.
- There is some evidence, that in recent times, retained personnel are being lost to comparable services e.g. the Ambulance Service, which are perceived as offering full-time employment opportunities.
- Social Welfare reform, coupled with a high demand for labour, have impacted negatively on the retained Service. There is also considerable anecdotal evidence that regulations in relation to Social Welfare Benefit are inconsistently applied in different parts of the country.
- There is also some attrition from the Fire Prevention area, because of perceived low relative rates of pay and limited career progression for people with skills which are in high demand in the private sector. A contributing factor is the lack of variation in the role, which at present is predominantly desk based.

Career Progression

4.44 Our findings and conclusions in relation to career progression are as follows:

- Starting with the McKinsey report which highlighted the need to create promotional opportunities across the ranks, successive reports have highlighted the problems caused by a lack of promotional opportunities within the Service[1]. With limited exceptions, the non-graduate recruit still has no possibility of progressing to a senior post. This is a significant problem which now needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- Where promotion is possible, there are in-built financial disincentives to compete for certain posts. For example, a Fire-fighter or Junior Officer who is promoted to Senior Officer could be financially worse-off as a result of the loss of shift allowances.
- There is no formalised link between the retained and the full-time Service and as such, time served in a retained brigade does not automatically guarantee consideration for vacancies in a full-time brigade.

1 *The Fire Service Conciliation Agreement, The Stardust Tribunal of Enquiry, Fire Service Working Group on Educational Qualifications*

- The two-tier entry system means that experienced and skilled people are not always given the opportunity to compete for posts which they are potentially capable of filling and the impact on the Service in terms of flagging motivation, high levels of disaffection and retention difficulties are obvious. Moving to a competency-based approach will alleviate the difficulties involved.
- Promotion is inevitably not a possibility for everyone in the Service and should not be regarded as the only means of providing for role diversification and for career development opportunities.

Other IR/HR Issues

4.45 The following IR / HR issues arose during the Review:

- Throughout our consultations across all ranks of the Service, the legacy of a historically poor IR regime was evident. The ethic of partnership, which is now deeply embedded in Irish industrial relations, has not yet been fully embraced within the Fire Service.
- HR initiatives such as Occupational Health and Safety programmes have met with resistance and fail to be implemented in certain Authorities despite the nature of risks to which Fire-fighters can be exposed in the course of duty.
- The Health and Safety regime is underdeveloped and the role of the Health and Safety representative in stations is unclear.
- Despite growing awareness across the Service of Post Traumatic Stress and Critical Incident Stress Management, specific initiatives have not been rolled-out to provide the necessary education and assistance in this regard.
- The lack of national standards as regards training, equipment and appliances has meant that the Service is bedevilled by comparisons. Remote rural stations are compared with other rural stations, urban stations are compared with urban stations in other counties and everywhere comparisons are drawn with Dublin. The lack of minimum standards allied to an absence of auditing of practices remains, therefore, a core problem within the Service.
- Significant numbers of Fire Service personnel regard the Gardaí as having a much more favourable insurance and compensation regime. The need to prove the negligence of a colleague of superior rank and the consequent impact on working relationships are cited as major obstacles to the effective operation of the compensation process. There is, therefore, a need to re-examine the compensation regime for occupational injury.
- Although the Occupational Health System was developed and agreed (for the retained service) the use of annual medicals is not uniformly applied.
- The retirement age for Fire-fighters has been set at 55, but in practice there is no universal mandatory retirement age in application across the Service. There is a lack of agreement on the ideal retirement age and some debate about whether age impacts on job related performance.
- Part-time workers, such as retained Fire-fighters have been brought within the scope of a range of new legislation in recent years. This will eventually increase costs associated with the Service.

- Within the retained service, in particular, there is a large amount of dissatisfaction with current pension / gratuity arrangements.

Culture Change

4.46 As a result of some of the endemic problems within the overall regime, and especially having regard to the adversarial industrial relations climate which has pertained to date, a significant culture change will be required at all levels if necessary improvement in the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime is to be brought about. While many of the problems and issues identified above relate to the overall statutory framework, the policy agenda and the structural and organisational arrangements, it will also be necessary to tackle the extent to which restrictive practices, lack of flexibility, suspicion and mistrust permeate the management / union agenda within the Fire Service. Putting the necessary framework in place to put the Fire Service on a better footing for the future will be to little avail unless it is accompanied by fundamental attitudinal and behaviour change on behalf of both the management and staff sides.

Conclusion

4.47 We recognised at the outset that our brief was extremely broad. Consequently, there is a wide array of issues to be addressed in order to tackle the deficiencies identified in our analysis. The next Section, which deals with our recommendations, sets out how we believe the core difficulties facing the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime should be addressed. It is important to understand, however, that in a Review of this nature and scope it would be difficult, impractical and unwise to make overly prescriptive recommendations on detailed issues. These matters will naturally be addressed in the course of the implementation process and in consultation with key stakeholders. Instead, our emphasis is on creating the framework which will provide the context for the strategic development of the Fire Safety and Fire Services in a manner consistent with international best practice and compatible with the needs and expectations of Irish society.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

5.1 A key issue to be addressed in formulating recommendations arising from this Strategic Review is the extent to which there is consensus across a range of stakeholder interests on the core question of whether or not a significant problem or problems exist with the current Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland. As a matter of equal consequence, it is also necessary to consider whether and to what extent there is empiric, objective evidence to support emerging views on the nature and the extent of any such problems as may be required to be addressed on foot of this Strategic Review.

5.2 In the earlier Sections of this Report, we have set out to describe the current regime for Fire Safety and Fire Services in Ireland and to analyse it in accordance with our Terms of Reference both intrinsically as regards its strengths and weaknesses and by reference to international trends and models of best practice. As might be anticipated in a regime which has its origins in a system which was put in place in 1945, and which was last reviewed in its entirety over 26 years ago, in 1975, a considerable array of shortcomings can now be identified. Our report brings together a wide variety of views on those shortcomings elicited from public consultations, submissions received on foot of public advertisements, structured interviews with the many stakeholder interests involved, responses to questionnaires issued by us, interaction with the Review Advisory Group appointed to oversee the Review, desk research, extensive documentation review, inputs from specialist international consultants in areas such as fire cover standards and major emergency management and from a programme of overseas visits.

5.3 However, the core question remains as to whether or not the shortcomings identified constitute a series of largely to be expected areas and opportunities for improvement in a regime which is inherently sound as regards its basic structures and organisational arrangements or whether the regime itself has been overtaken by time, events and best practice trends and is, therefore, in need of substantial overhaul. Before, therefore, outlining our recommendations, it is necessary that we address ourselves to this core question. We do so in the paragraphs which follow.

5.4 In the first instance, we need to remind ourselves that the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland seeks to deliver on the following core functions:

- The development and delivery of programmes and measures in relation to Fire Safety;
- Responding to fire calls;
- Responding to other emergency call-outs;
- Involvement in the mechanisms for planning and responding to major emergencies.

5.5 It is also necessary to recall that the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland is planned and delivered by a variety of statutory bodies, chief amongst which are:

- The Department of the Environment and Local Government;
- The Fire Services Council;
- The National Safety Council;
- The 37 Local Authorities which are designated as statutory local Fire Authorities and Building Control Authorities.

The Need for Balance

5.6 As previously pointed out, it would be surprising if a Strategic Review of this nature, coming some 26 years after the last such review, did not elicit a large number of areas where change is necessary and where scope for improvement exists. It is also inevitable that the extensive programme of internal and external consultation undertaken, as an intrinsic part of the Review process, would concentrate on the shortcomings rather than on the strengths of the current regime.

5.7 However, in Section 4 above we have sought to achieve a level of balance in considering the issues raised by this Review. In the first instance it is necessary to recognise that there are many positive features of the current regime and we have, therefore, highlighted these. In this regard, it must be acknowledged that the overall regime has, as pointed out, improved immeasurably since it was last reviewed and since the deficiencies highlighted in the Stardust Tribunal report were brought to attention. Secondly, it should be acknowledged that the deficiencies now described on foot of this Review will, we expect, come as little surprise to those involved in the regime. Government had already recognised the existence of problems with the regime in approving enhanced capital funding in recent years. The Minister, in addition, had recognised the need to tackle areas other than the capital spend and the commissioning of this Review in itself is consistent with his stated intention of bringing about improvement in Ireland's Fire Safety and Fire Services.

5.8 In our view, three key points need to be constantly borne in mind in examining, debating and considering the outcome from this Review as follows:

- It is a long time since the last review of the regime was carried out. It is understandable in that context that developments in public services at central and local Government levels, international best practice, economic and social requirements etc. will all have moved on and will inevitably mean that the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime has been overtaken by events. It would be unfortunate if the debate on the need for fundamental change, as we see it, were to degenerate into a sterile process of blame allocation. There would, in our view, be little point in reviewing the Service against a background of changed circumstances and requirements if the inevitable need to reassess what is needed for the future were to lead only to a concentration on what is wrong with a regime that was not designed to meet those changed circumstances and requirements.

- It would be unfortunate if the inevitable public concern about our state of preparedness to respond to major emergencies, and disasters and the consequent need to reassess our requirements in that regard, were to evolve into a process where defensiveness and the need to allay potential concerns overshadowed the need to take a critical and fresh look at what changes are now needed for the future particularly as regards the "blue light" emergency response regime which is the element of overall major emergency management which comes within the scope of this Review.
- With the passage of time, the issues which need to be dealt with in bringing about change in the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime are fundamental and far reaching in their implications. We are concerned that the process for decision-making arising from the Review should concentrate on the big picture and on putting a new framework in place. To us, this is a far more important issue than the many detailed findings and conclusions relating to matters which we were required by our Terms of Reference to examine and comment on but which are essentially symptomatic of, and subordinate to, the smaller number of key strategic and systemic change requirements which are now necessary.

Bringing About Change

5.9 From the extensive consultation process which has underpinned this Review, and from our in-depth bilateral discussions at various stages with the key stakeholder interests involved, we do not expect there to be fundamental disagreement with the analysis of the current situation particularly on the "big picture" deficiency issues outlined in Section 4 above.

5.10 The major issue of potential disagreement and debate is, we believe, more likely to arise as to the extent of deviation from current structures, roles, responsibilities, organisational arrangements, staffing arrangements, HR practices and procedures and funding levels required to implement a vision of best practice for the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime. There is also scope for considerable debate as to the relative priority to be accorded to the necessary change programme, on the potential and need for a phased approach to change and on the practicality, feasibility and affordability of the recommendations made. We expect that there will be different views on these matters given the different perspectives and priorities of the many stakeholder interests involved.

5.11 There are no definitive answers to these questions. A variety of views exist among the stakeholder community as to the seriousness of the individual deficiencies in the current regime and the extent of the remedial measures needed to redress them. Our objectives in presenting this report on the outcome of the Strategic Review to the Minister can best be summarised as follows:

- We want to emphasise that the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime in Ireland has suffered from under-investment and notwithstanding increases in both revenue and capital provisions in recent years, now requires further investment especially on the non-capital side.

- We are particularly anxious to impress upon Government that a new vision for the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime is needed which will reinvigorate it, motivate its personnel at all levels and place it on a modernisation path which will bring it, over time, into line with best practice.
- We have become convinced of the importance of Fire Safety, Fire Services and of the Fire Service input to Major Emergency Management as key national policy issues which have yet, in our view, to be accorded the priority which they deserve.
- We strongly believe that considerable change must be introduced and that the current structures and organisational arrangements do not represent the ideal platform for implementing such change. The issues are not just about lack of resources and variations/problems with local service delivery. There is, we believe, a central problem with lack of priority, leadership, direction and compliance monitoring. Many of the other problems identified are essentially symptomatic of this central problem.
- We do not want to present the Minister with a blueprint for the future which is not capable of implementation. We are committed to finding a pragmatic, phased and affordable way forward which will be capable of implementation over a reasonable timeframe. In this regard, we are extremely conscious of the fact that there are many competing and conflicting agendas among the very wide stakeholder community involved in this Review and that compromise together with commitment to the vision for an improved Service will, therefore, have to be core values in deciding on the way forward subsequent to the presentation of this Report.

5.12 Ultimately, however, decisions on the outcome of this Review are matters for the Minister, the Government and their advisors. While we have worked closely with the key stakeholders, and with the Review Advisory Group overseeing the Review, in conducting the Review, we have remained independent in presenting our findings, conclusions and recommendations. By definition, these will not be uniformly acceptable to all parties to the Review process. In the final analysis, decisions on the way forward will, in our view, come down to four key issues as follows:

- The relative national priority to be accorded to Fire Safety and Fire Services in an environment of many competing priorities.
- The degree of acceptance or otherwise of the exposures, gaps and deficiencies in the current arrangements and the level of importance attached to benchmarking against best practice in that regard.
- The extent to which it is believed that significant structural and organisational change as opposed to mere operational change, is a necessary enabling mechanism for the required change programme.
- The extent to which the changes recommended on foot of this Review are seen as necessary, implementable and affordable having regard to available resources.

5.13 We believe that a new vision is necessary and deliverable. In the paragraphs which follow we set out our vision and the framework which we believe will be required in order to make it a reality.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Alignment with Societal Expectations / Needs (risk minimisation)
   - (Protection of Life
   - (Protection of Infrastructure
   - (Major Emergency Management
2. Linkage to Other Relevant National Policies Programmes
   - (SMI/BLG
   - (Customer Focus
   - (Performance Management
3. Assured Quality / Equality of Service Delivery
4. Value for Money (sound economic/social basis)
5. Build on Existing Strengths / Infrastructure
6. Transparency
7. People Development

Key Principles

5.14 We have developed a set of key principles which we believe should underpin the vision, values and framework for the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime into the future. These are listed on the page opposite.

5.15 The main points we wish to emphasise in relation to these key principles are as follows:

- **Aligning** the regime with societal expectations and needs with a particular emphasis on risk minimisation should be a central tenet. The focus needs to be on the protection of life, the protection of infrastructure and on participation in the full cycle of the "blue light" input to major emergency planning and management. The regime should embrace the full range of activity undertaken and to this extent might more accurately be described as a Fire and Civil Protection regime reflecting, on the one hand, its origins in its core fire functions and, on the other hand, its existing participation at European level in the wider Civil Protection agenda. We see this as potentially useful and appropriate terminology to use in that it recognises the wider brief which already exists while, at the same time, avoids further confusion in the light of recent Government decisions by not using emergency planning / management nomenclature and stops short of pitching the regime into the wider Public Safety arena which was the subject of a separate review last year undertaken on behalf of the Tanaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. However, in our consultations with stakeholder interests as part of the Review Advisory Group process it is clear that while most parties are happy with the suggested change of title there is a reluctance in some quarters to adopt the proposed terminology. This is not an issue on which the Review should stand or fall and we could accept, if preferred, a title based on Fire and Emergency Services, although other emergency services outside the Local Authority family may not appreciate the title.
- **Linkage** to other relevant national policies and programmes is important because it creates the opportunity to link developments in relation to the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime into the mainstream SMI / BLG modernisation programmes, to which core values such as customer focus, performance management, HR development and joined-up Government are central. This latter point is especially important in driving an integrated focus on the full safety chain processes (hazard identification and risk assessment, prevention and mitigation, planning and preparedness, response, recovery) and not just on the planning and response processes on which the current regime concentrates.
- **Quality Assurance** and equality of protection is critical in the light of the different standards which currently apply to service delivery in this area. Ensuring that minimum safety standards apply (including performance monitoring in that regard) should not be seen as shifting the democratic balance between central and local Government.

- **Value for Money** is a challenging concept in the context of Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services functions not least when the partly contingent nature of the Service has to be taken into account. However, it is essential to providing a drive for a more research-based and validated economic and social justification for on-going investment in the regime. Furthermore, it will help to drive target setting, performance management, reporting and monitoring of compliance as key features of the regime.
- **Building** on existing strengths / infrastructure must also be a core principle having regard particularly to the points we made earlier about the need for balance in presenting any analysis of the current situation. There are many positives which can be built upon and it will be important to use the concept of evolution liberally in defining the way forward. We also need a principle enshrined in this process which recognises strongly that "we are where we are" in relation to the physical infrastructure of the regime (location of stations etc.) and that any shift in cover requirements arising from new approaches to determining fire cover standards will have to be carefully planned, gradual and make maximum use and leverage of existing stations and their locations. Any unrealistic expectations that a change in the methodology for determining fire cover standards will lead to wholesale, short-term closing / opening / relocation of stations will need to be managed from the outset.
- **Transparency** is an important principle from the point of view of customer focus and excellence in service delivery. The path forward must include greater transparency in the level of cover / response provided, the justification for the cover arrangements in place and must also provide for greater transparency in targets and reporting on results achieved across the full range of functions / services including those in the enforcement, prevention and mitigation arena.
- **People Development** as a principle must be fully embraced by the regime into the future. There are serious shortcomings in this area in the current regime which, when allied to considerable historical baggage, entrenched positions and resistance to change, will present a major challenge to change the prevailing culture. Developing a regime which mainstreams equality and parity of esteem, which levels the career advancement playing pitch for all, which will support movement to a greater emphasis on prevention and which puts the health, safety, welfare, training, equipping and development of its personnel at all levels (full-time and retained) at the core of its strategic development programme will be a very significant critical success factor going forward.
- **Local Delivery** will, as previously outlined, remain a key principle given the nature of the services provided. The complex nature of relationships in this area needs to be made explicit. In particular, there will need to be a new understanding of the role played by the centre in relation to developing standards, norms and processes, for ensuring the identification and adoption of best practice and for performance management and reporting. Again, it will be important to emphasise that such a role for the centre is not inconsistent with local determination of needs nor with local service delivery.

A PROPOSED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Mission

"Delivering a safer society, in conjunction with other relevant parties, through reducing death and injury, damage to property and damage to the environment from fire and other emergencies"

Vision

- Working with other agencies and local communities to reduce risks
- Intervening promptly and effectively
- Well equipped, skilful and highly-motivated workforce working safely to achieve outcomes
- Delivering value for money through results and continuous improvement

Outcomes

- Reductions in the number of fires
- Reductions in death and injuries from fire and other emergencies
- Reductions in the social and economic cost
- Targeted improvements in resource utilisation / modernisation
- Measurable increase in customer satisfaction

- **International Best Practice**, suitably adapted to our unique requirements, must provide a strong enabling influence in helping the regime to benchmark its current status and to help it to continually strive for excellence in service delivery while, at the same time, avoiding any tendency to ape a model or models for the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services functions not suited to Irish circumstances or which would push the cost of moving forward outside an affordable envelope of expenditure having regard to available resources.

5.16 The key principles set out above have shaped our thinking on how the future should unfold in relation to those matters referred to us for review under our Terms of Reference. They underpin the more detailed recommendations set out below. From the outset of this Review, we have strongly believed that if we could identify and build consensus around the key principles which should apply, much of the detail would fall into place in terms of what needs to change and how such change will best be enabled.

Vision

5.17 We set out on the page opposite our vision for the future Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime in Ireland incorporating a proposed mission statement and a set of outcomes which will require to be firmed up and made specific by those charged with implementing the outcome from this Strategic Review. While there is a tendency to be sceptical about statements of mission, vision and outcomes, we are convinced of their importance particularly in the context of underpinning necessary cultural and organisational change which is of a significant rather than of a marginal nature.

5.18 We believe that the vision set out by us will provide a focus for policy makers and legislators in terms of an agreed vision of what needs to be in place. We also believe that it will, when adopted, provide inspiration for those working in, or aspiring to work, at all levels, in the field of Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services. Furthermore, each element, from mission, to vision to outcomes comprises part of an overall template which can be used to summarise key shortcomings in the current regime and, more importantly, to put down clear markers to underpin the required change programme to be embarked upon in order to put the vision into operation.

A Recommended Structural Model

5.19 We have identified a number of minimum core requirements to which any structural model for the planning, development and delivery of Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services functions falling within the ambit of this Review should conform. These are:

- The provision of a strong and integrated focus at national level including the provision of the required competencies and capability to ensure strong national leadership, direction and performance monitoring of the regime.
- The extension of the concept of regionalisation beyond the communications and mobilisation functions currently coordinated (in part at least) at that level in order to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness and value for money.

- Strengthened, better resourced and more effective arrangements at local Fire Authority level operating in a more consistent manner and delivering a higher quality of service.

The National Level

5.20 In order to provide the necessary strong and integrated focus at national level, we believe that the following steps should be implemented:

- The functions currently discharged by the Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section of the Department, by the Fire Advisory staff of the Department, and by the Fire Services Council should be brought together into a single unified structure.
- The unified structure thus created at national level should also assume the functions and roles associated with the planning and oversight of the implementation of all aspects of building control. It should also assume all functions and roles for licensing in respect of the fire safety aspects. The policy functions in relation to general building regulations and standards development should remain separate from this structure albeit with close working relationships in order to ensure that there is no discontinuity between policy development and implementation in this key area.
- The recommended unified structure should be responsible for taking on new and expanded roles in the following areas, the details in relation to which are developed in later sub-sections of this Report;
  - Developing, rolling out and overseeing the implementation of a new risk-based approach to determining standards of fire cover,
  - Developing, rolling out and overseeing a new national process for major emergency planning and management in respect of 'blue light' emergency response and for overall national coordination of the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services input in this area,
  - Setting best practice processes and targets, monitoring compliance and performance management of the full Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services remit,
  - Undertaking a structured programme of research and development,
  - Developing, rolling out and overseeing a new programme in relation to Community Fire Safety to underpin a new emphasis and concentration on prevention and mitigation.
  - Building control implementation.
- The new unified structure recommended by us should also be resourced in order to have the competence and capability to develop and implement enhanced programmes in the following areas, the details of which, again, are set out in the later sub-sections;
  - The drawing together of the capital funding requirements of the Fire Authorities and the allocation of capital funding.
  - The development, roll-out and oversight of new and enhanced national standards and programmes in relation to the developmental HR functions to

include training and development, a competency-based approach to recruitment, career progression and retention, health, safety and welfare at work and equality in association, where appropriate, with the LGMSB.

- Coordination, development and oversight of new programmes and approaches to underpin Information Technology and Management Information Systems development and utilisation within the overall regime.
- Coordination of requirements and the development, placing and possibly movement towards out-sourced procurement contracts for the fire station build and refurbishment programme, for the appliance fleet and for specialist and other major equipment purchases.

- The new unified structure at national level should have responsibility for overseeing the planning, coordination and delivery of certain roles and functions in the regime which should be discharged on a regional basis. These should include communications and mobilisation, training and development, major emergency planning and management, regional campaigns in relation to safety and recruitment, major event licensing, specialist rescue functions, teams and equipment and voluntary sector coordination. We will return later in this Section of our Report to the issue of regionalisation.
- Finally, as regards the high-level functional remit of the recommended new unified structure, we are strongly of the view that certain functions, the statutory responsibility for which currently lies elsewhere, should be brought within the ambit of the new Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime. The functions involved are;
  - The statutory functions currently exercised by the Minister and by the Department of Defence in relation to Civil Defence should be transferred to the Minister and to the Department of the Environment and Local Government and be brought within the ambit of the new Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime at national and local levels. We believe that such a move will provide a whole new focus and impetus for the Civil Defence regime and that it will help to build, strengthen, integrate and underpin the important role played by the voluntary sector. In our view, the future role and functioning of the Civil Defence regime, and the multiplicity of community and emergency roles discharged by it, will better be secured and developed under the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services banner than under a national security and military banner where it currently resides at national level. After all, Civil Defence functions already fall within the Local Authority ambit at local level.
  - The functions currently assigned to the National Safety Council in relation to fire safety promotion and awareness should be transferred to the Department of the Environment and Local Government and be discharged by the new unified structure recommended by us. Such a move will, we believe, be central to a major new strategic focus at national and local levels on

prevention and mitigation and provide the impetus and the underpinning for a necessary new programme at both levels in relation to Community Fire Safety with a particular emphasis on engaging all Fire Authorities and all fire personnel at the local level in its delivery.

- The functions currently discharged by the Minister and by the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources (under the Marine Safety Directorate and the Irish Coast Guard) in relation to inland waterways safety and search and rescue should be transferred to the Minister and the Department of the Environment and Local Government and be brought within the ambit of the new unified structure recommended by us. Fire Authorities are the statutory inland rescue service and respond to some 200 water-based incidents annually in discharging that role. There is a need to strengthen their role in this area and the integration of the Civil Defence Functions will assist in that regard. We can see little merit in the inland waterways search and rescue regime evolving on the basis of local Fire Authorities providing the on-the-ground expertise and capability as a declared facility to a third party but with planning, command and control, coordination and tasking responsibilities resting with the Irish Coast Guard. We believe that the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime is a more appropriate home for these functions and that it has more appropriate local structures, the necessary emergency service competence and an already existing communications and mobilisation infrastructure for their effective discharge. Our recommendations in this regard, if implemented, will obviate the necessity for the development of parallel structures, staffing arrangements and communications / mobilisation infrastructure within the Irish Coast Guard. In tandem with the foregoing recommendation, we believe that the Local Authority lifeguard function should come within the ambit of the local Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime and that its tasking and support should take place within the Local Authority communications and mobilisation regime rather than operating as a declared facility to the Irish Coast Guard with which it has no other organisational linkages.
- For similar reasons, the functions currently discharged by the Garda Síochana in relation to the coordination and tasking of voluntary Mountain and Cave search and rescue teams should be transferred to the Minister and the Department of the Environment and Local Government and be discharged nationally and locally by the unified Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime recommended by us. In addition, we believe that the new Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime at national and local level should take on a development, coordination and integration role in relation to the wider voluntary sector which has the potential to contribute significantly in this area to include dog search and rescue teams, the Order of Malta, St John's Ambulance and other relevant bodies. When allied to our earlier

recommendation in relation to Civil Defence, we believe that the aforementioned recommendations, which are all aimed at reinforcing, supporting and developing the role and functioning of the voluntary sector, will, if adopted and implemented, provide a significant new national and local focus for the voluntary sector input and will potentially provide Government with the opportunity to make a significant commitment to enhancement of the voluntary sector.

- In considering the functional remit of the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime it was suggested, given its extensive infrastructure, that the Fire Service should have overall responsibility on a nationwide basis for the Emergency Ambulance Service. Dublin Fire Brigade provides a significant portion of the Emergency Ambulance service on a contract basis for the Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA). We concluded that the provision of an Ambulance Service is primarily a matter for the Health Authorities. Any change in the current arrangements should, therefore, arise from the requirements of the health service and we are not, therefore, suggesting any change at this point. If, on either a national or local level, the Health Service wished to enter into negotiations to have some or all of the pre-hospital care service e.g. defibrillation provided by the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime, we believe that the regime should seriously consider any such approaches. However, the extension of the provision of pre-hospital services by the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime should only be considered in the context of a clear Service Level Agreement between the parties involved in relation to the standards of service, procedures and processes involved and with a clear and transparent financial contract which would ensure full cost recovery. Such a Service Level Agreement approach is required in our view in any event in order to underpin the potential benefits to the public where there is a level of unclarity as regards first-responder roles. We believe first-responder training should be mandatory for all Fire Service personnel. However on-scene roles, responsibilities and hand-over arrangements need to be clarified in the interests of the public, and to alleviate fears among Ambulance Service personnel.

5.21 The recommendations set out in paragraph 5.20 above represent our core recommendations on bringing together into a more coherent and integrated regime a set of closely related and congruent functions aimed at tackling the problems associated with diffusion of authority, responsibility and accountability which permeates the current arrangements. We turn now to our recommendations on how best to bring this new integrated Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime into being.

A New Central Authority

5.22 We believe that there is a need to establish a new Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authority to implement the recommendations, discharge the functions and provide strong national leadership for the regime set out above. In effect this will mean re-titling the Fire Services Council as the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authority,

OPTIONS - ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

	OPTION 1 NEW LEGISLATION MODEL	OPTION 2 'OFFICE'MODEL	OPTION 3 EVOLUION MODEL
ADVANTAGES	☐ Independence ☐ Clear Governance regime at Board level ☐ Clarity on statutory powers ☐ Unambiguously removed from Civil Service structure ☐ New primary legislation	☐ Easy to establish - legislative change not needed ☐ Not threatening to Local Authority autonomy ☐ Potential for greater integration and ring-fencing of functions within DOELG	☐ Relatively easy to establish by Ministerial action - no time delay ☐ Clearly builds on current strengths / roles ☐ More independence than under current regime but not threatening as in the case of the new legislation model ☐ Introduces greater accountability for local Fire Authorities without changing the nature of the relationship between Central and Local Government
DISADVANTAGES	☐ Would take new legislation and considerable time to implement ☐ Would threaten the independence of local Fire Authorities ☐ Independent role could cause other problems in terms of acceptability and feasibility of implementation ☐ Potential for unplanned cost escalation	☐ Lack of independence ☐ No board - essentially an administrative device ☐ Potentially unacceptable to key groups - could be portrayed as a "no change" approach ☐ Difficult for it to drive the necessary change agenda	☐ Compromise on independence will be resisted by some key groups ☐ Difficult to establish new role and functioning and shake off the baggage associated with the current regime ☐ Potentially more costly than the 'office' model while less costly than the new legislation model

expanding its role and remit and integrating into the structure thus created, the other staff and resources in the Department currently devoted to fire and emergency planning functions. The task of bringing about real change in structures, organisational arrangements, operations, culture and people development with a view to impacting on reductions in fires, fire deaths, injuries and social and economic loss from fire and other emergencies should not be underestimated. It is, we believe, essential that the core outcome from this Strategic Review will be a headline message, signalling the seriousness of intent to tackle current short-comings, through the establishment of a new Authority to develop, lead and direct a new departure for Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services functions in Ireland.

5.23 We looked at a number of options for how the new Authority could be brought into existence and what its key relationships with the Minister, the Department of the Environment and Local Government and the Local Authorities / Fire Authorities should be under the new regime. The options which we considered in this regard were:

- Introducing new legislation to establish the Authority under the aegis of the Minister and the Department of the Environment and Local Government on the lines of the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Roads Authority. A similar model and approach was also used to establish the Health and Safety Authority.
- Using the powers available under the Public Services Management Act, 1997 to integrate and delegate functions and to essentially establish the Authority as an "office" within the Department of the Environment and Local Government.
- Using the powers available to the Minister under the Local Government Services (Corporate Bodies) Act, 1971 to establish the Authority. Effectively, this is the legislation which, together with the Fire Services Act, 1981, underpins the existing Fire Services Council. This option would, therefore, primarily involve expanding and developing the role and functioning of the Fire Services Council and other existing structures to provide a launching pad for the new Authority as an evolution of the existing arrangements.

5.24 The tabular statement on the page opposite sets out our views on the advantages and disadvantages of the three options considered by us. These represent our objective analysis of the situation. It is important to make this point because what is seen to be an advantage or a disadvantage of a particular approach will depend on the perspective and agenda of the person / group looking at the options. Given the wide disparity of views within the stakeholder community consulted as part of this Review, for example, we know that some parties will see "independence" as a key strength of a particular option while others will see that same quality as a major disadvantage. Against that background, it is important that we remain objective in developing our recommendations.

5.25 Having assessed the various options, our view is that the medium to longer-term future for the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime in Ireland may well be best secured by new primary legislation establishing a new Authority with considerable day to day

executive authority and substantial financial independence. However, we also believe that the regime is, perhaps, not as yet, developed enough to recommend immediate movement to such a full-blown new legislation model. There are also a number of other practical considerations to be taken into account which have influenced our thinking on the most appropriate action to recommend at this point.

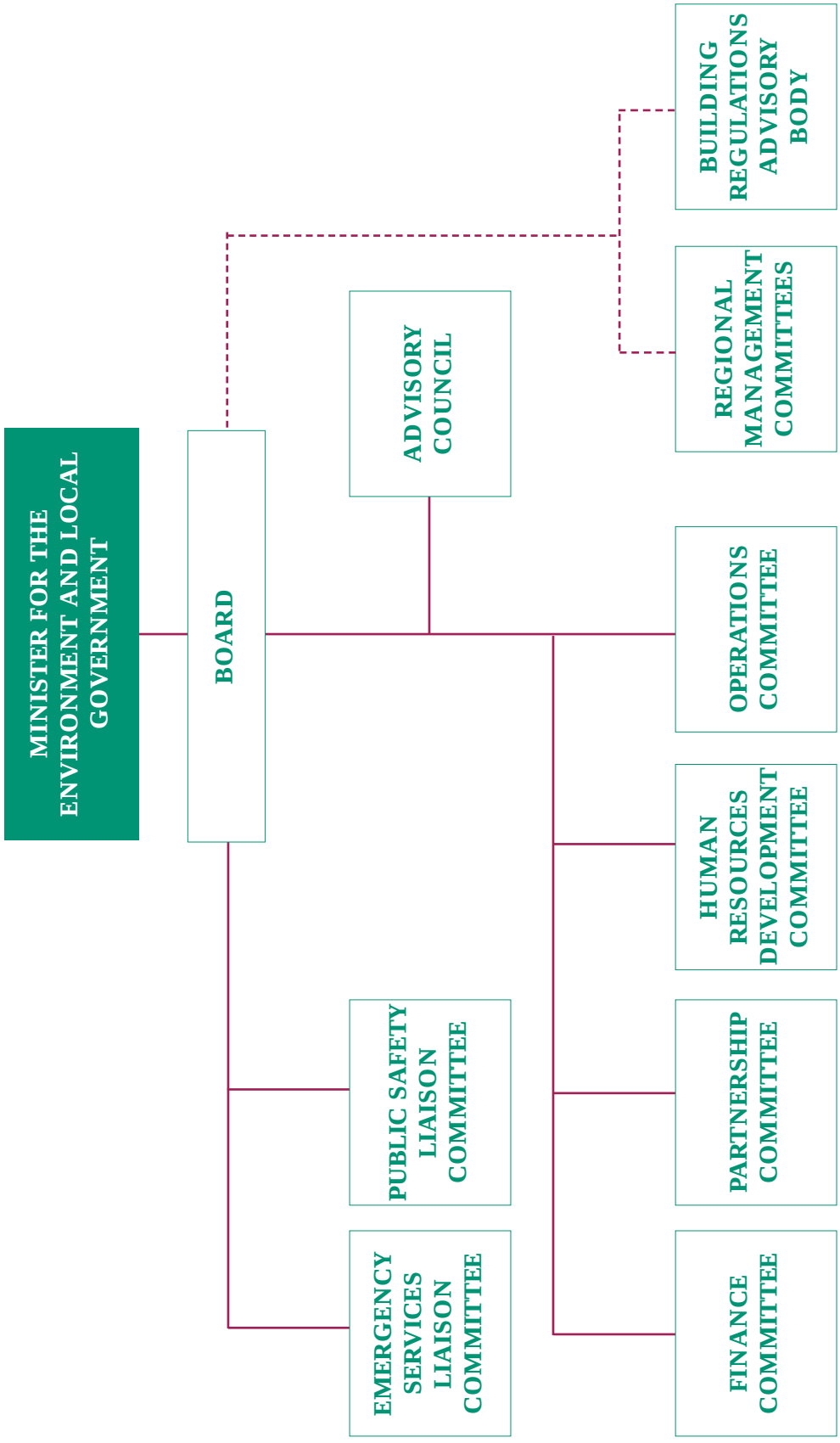
5.26 On balance, we believe that the Authority should initially be established on the basis of an evolutionary model. The key factors influencing our decision in this regard are:

- We are conscious of the need to move quickly to begin the process of addressing the many deficiencies in the current regime. The lengthy procedures involved in bringing forward new primary legislation are not compatible with that requirement and much of the positive impetus created by this Strategic Review would inevitably be dissipated if there is a long gap between the presentation of our report on the Review outcome and affirmative action being taken on its key recommendations.
- It will, we think, be better to test the water, using the evolutionary approach to gain experience of the Authority model in action, before moving to a model based on new primary legislation. This approach will enable practices, procedures and operational experience to be developed such that the new regime does not undermine or threaten the democratic balance and the nature of the relationship between Central and Local Government in relation to Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services functions.
- The core structures are already there in terms of the Fire Services Council, the administrative and professional / technical streams in the Department and in the National Safety Council to make it possible to move rapidly to the implementation stage using the Minister's powers under the Local Government Services (Corporate Bodies) Act, 1971 to redesignate and expand the existing arrangements as the core of the new Authority. Such an approach will have the added advantage of building on existing strengths as well as dealing with the major deficiencies in the current arrangements.
- We believe, as detailed later in the sub-section on funding, that the evolutionary path will be capable of being implemented within an affordable cost envelope.
- We believe that successful consultancy projects in the Strategic Review arena are as much about the process involved as they are about the content of the subject under review. In this regard, considerable time and effort has been spent undertaking consultation and dialogue with the key stakeholder interests involved. We believe that there is greater potential for building a consensus for implementation and progress around the evolutionary model than is the case with either of the other two options considered.

5.27 At least three critical considerations will arise in implementing the direction now recommended by us as follows:

- We realise that the route recommended will not enable the transfer of functions (Civil Defence etc) currently outside the remit of the Minister of the Environment and Local Government to the new Authority immediately. A separate process leading to Government decisions in respect of such functions will be required. We strongly believe that this factor should not be allowed to delay the establishment of the Authority which should, we believe, be immediately announced and brought into being if the Minister accepts our recommendations in that regard. The separate process leading to Government decisions on the transfer of other functions should proceed as a parallel exercise over the shortest possible timeframe especially given the importance of harnessing the potential of visible support from Government for the voluntary sector.
- While not upsetting the fundamentals of the intricate relationship between Central and Local Government, the drafting of the instrument(s) to establish the Authority will need to make it clear that there will be a new role involved which will make Local Fire Authorities more accountable for performance. It must, therefore, be made clear that the new Authority will be empowered to set national mandatory processes and procedures (not definitive mandatory standards) in all key functional areas, that it will monitor the application of such processes and procedures, that it will develop models of best practice and performance indicators for the overall regime and that it will monitor and report to the Minister, and through him, to the Houses of the Oireachtas annually on the performance of the regime as a whole as well as on the performance of their functions by the Local Fire Authorities. The Authority should develop its role in this regard on a consultative basis with Local Authorities. In this regard, while the question of the establishment of a statutory inspectorate has been around since the Stardust Tribunal Report, and is still advocated by many stakeholder groups, we believe that the best practice, performance management and reporting regime recommended by us, as an integral part of the functioning of the new Authority, is a preferable route for the introduction of performance monitoring to going down the road of a separate statutory inspectorate. We believe that our recommendation in this regard, provided the role and relationships are properly specified in the establishment instrument(s) for the Authority, will deliver all of the benefits associated with an inspectorate without separating out the functions involved in a parallel structure with the obvious additional cost and other implications involved. Our recommendations in this regard will, therefore, we hope, put the long-standing 'inspectorate' debate to bed.
- There will need to be a practical approach to seeing how necessary Ministerial Orders and Statutory Instruments can be used to overcome, on an interim basis pending new primary legislation, the deficiencies in the current legislative frameworks as identified in Section 4 above.

FIRE AND CIVIL PROTECTION/EMERGENCY SERVICES AUTHORITY - GOVERNANCE ARRANGMENTS



5.28 Our recommendations on this aspect of the Review, therefore, can best be summarised as follows:

- There is, in our view, a strong case that new primary legislation may be the best medium to long-term solution to current deficiencies. However, establishing a new Authority on that basis in the short-term would probably be premature.
- We see little or no merit in the "office" model.
- We recommend the evolutionary model for bringing the Authority on stream, building as it does on existing structures and strengths while using existing Ministerial powers to do so.
- We believe that this approach should be reviewed in 3 to 5 years time and that the issue of further evolution of the Authority concept based on new primary legislation be reconsidered at that point in the light of experience of its operation.

Governance

5.29 The chart on the page opposite sets out our views on the governance arrangements for the proposed new Authority. We believe that it will be important that the structures for the new Authority will provide adequate opportunity for stakeholder consultation and input as well as adequate liaison with partner agencies/bodies together with other relevant external liaison.

5.30 The key features of the proposed governance arrangements are as follows:

- The Authority should have a Board which will be appointed by, and report to, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government.
- In our view, the Board should have a strong governance role in relation to the Authority in line with the concept of a Board of Directors to whom the Chief Officer of the Authority will be accountable. In this regard, we do not see the Board as an advisory or representational body. Such requirements are provided for separately in the proposed governance model. The Board envisaged by us, therefore, will operate to a different concept than the current Fire Services Council.
- While the issue of appointments to the Board is a matter for the Minister, we strongly advocate that care and thought is given to the composition of the Board. The Board Chairperson should, we believe, be from a background other than the direct stakeholder community involved in the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime. The other members of the Board should also be appointed having regard to their competence to contribute to a strong governance regime for the Authority and to its core functions.
- In addition to its Board, the Authority should have an Advisory Council largely along the lines of the current Fire Services Council. The Advisory Council should be representative of the stakeholder interests with all the key groupings having adequate representation. Its primary function should be to provide a consultation forum in relation to the policies and strategies of the Authority and to receive feedback and input from stakeholders, including staff representatives, on an on-going basis.

- The Board should be supported in its role by two Liaison Committees as follows:
  - An Emergency Services Liaison Committee which will effectively comprise representatives of the partner emergency services and will provide the mechanisms for coordination of the work of the Authority with that of its partners in the field of emergency services. The role and functioning of the current Interdepartmental Committee on Major Emergency Management should be considered for absorption into this new Emergency Services Liaison Committee as one of its core functions.
  - A Public Safety Liaison Committee which will effectively comprise representatives of other bodies in the public safety arena, e.g. the Health and Safety Authority and the National Safety Council (in relation to its road safety functions). Again, the main purpose will be to provide for on-going consultation and liaison with other bodies involved in the wider public safety arena.
- The Authority should have a "dotted-line" consultation and information relationship with the Regional Management Committees currently in place for the 'CAMP' regions but which will have expanded roles into the future for regional coordination and with the Building Regulations Advisory Body in relation to building control implementation.
- The Board should have a number of sub-committees dealing with specific aspects of its remit in the areas of Finance, Human Resources (including training, health and safety and equality issues) and Operations. These sub-committees should comprise a mix of Board members and co-opted members with expertise/interest in the relevant areas from within the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime at national and local levels or who are subject specialists from outside the regime.
- A national Partnership Committee should be established for the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime along the lines of those operating in other areas of the public sector under the PPF. Local Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Partnership Committees should also be established. The national and local Partnership Committees should be representative of all strands of management and staff (full-time and retained) and should play a key role in the implementation of the extensive change programme which will emerge from this Review process.

5.31 The Governance arrangements recommended above will represent a substantial departure from the current arrangements. They will, if implemented, address many of the deficiencies identified in relation to the existing regime as regards national leadership. They represent, in our view, a logical evolution of the current arrangements having regard to the changed circumstances since they were originally put in place.

FIRE AND CIVIL PROTECTION/EMERGENCY SERVICES AUTHORITY
PROPOSED MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Director of Operations

(Eastern Region Coordination)

Key Functions

- ☐ Fire Cover Process
- ☐ Communications and Mobilisation
- ☐ Specialist Operations
- ☐ Operational Guidelines
- ☐ Operational Performance Monitoring
- ☐ Training
- ☐ Research and Development

Core Staffing Level

- ☐ 5 Senior Mgt Posts
- ☐ 5 Middle Mgt Posts
- ☐ 3 Support Staff

Director of Safety Programmes

(Mid-Western / Southern Region Cordination)

Key Functions

- ☐ Building Control implementation
- ☐ Community Fire Safety
- ☐ Licensing Regime
- ☐ Promotion, awareness, Education
- ☐ Safety Performance Monitoring
- ☐ Public Safety Liaison

Core Staffing Level

- ☐ 3 Senior Mgt Posts
- ☐ 3 Middle Mgt Posts
- ☐ 2 Support Staff

Director of Major Emergency Management

(Western Region coordination)

Key Functions

- ☐ Emergency Planning Process
- ☐ National EM Coordination
- ☐ International Liaison
- ☐ Voluntary Sector Coordination
- ☐ Partner Emergency Service Liaison

Core Staffing Level

- ☐ 3 Senior Mgt Posts
- ☐ 5 Middle Mgts Posts
- ☐ 3 Support Staff

Director of Corporate Services

Key Functions

- ☐ Capital Funding
- ☐ Health & Safety
- ☐ Developmental HR Functions
- ☐ Information Technology
- ☐ Public Reltions
- ☐ Board Secretariat

Core Staffing Level

- ☐ 3 Senior Mgt Posts
- ☐ 5 Middle Mgt Posts
- ☐ 5 Support Staff

Total Staffing Complement = 46 posts

Authority Management and Staffing Structure

5.32 The proposed organisation chart setting out the proposed allocation of functions, management and staffing structures of the Authority is set out in diagrammatic form on the page opposite. The key features of the proposed structure and staffing arrangements are developed in the paragraphs below.

5.33 We believe that the Authority should operate with an integrated and unified staffing structure based on competence in the functions to be discharged and which should seek to overcome the inefficiencies associated with the current dual structure arrangements in the Department. Any residual Departmental functions in this area should be in relation to legislation and securing appropriate resources for the Authority.

5.34 The Authority should be headed by a Chief Executive who will report to the Board. The appointment of a Chief Executive will be a key decision in the implementation process arising from this Review. The post should, we believe, be filled by open competition. The key competency requirements for the person to fill this post should include:

- The ability to manage, lead and direct the Authority having regard to the specialist nature and complexity of its remit.
- A deep understanding and experience of emergency services and the overall safety agenda.
- The ability to influence and operate at a senior level as a leading professional in Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services matters at national level and to represent the national interest in these areas internationally.
- Commitment and competence to drive an extensive programme of change.

5.35 The Authority should have four directorates each headed by a Director. The four Director posts should also be filled by competition based on competency requirements related to the functions for which they will be responsible and accountable viz, Operations, Safety Programmes, Major Emergency Management and Corporate Services. These Director posts should be filled by experts in the respective functional areas.

5.36 The posts at Chief Executive and Director level should be viewed as the most senior posts within the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime in Ireland. They should, therefore, represent the apex of the career progression paths for the staff of the Authority itself and for those who have reached the top of the hierarchical ladder in local Fire Authorities.

5.37 Each Director should have responsibility and accountability for a defined functional remit. In addition, three of the Director posts (those heading the Operations, Safety Programmes and Major Emergency Management Directorates) should have responsibility for the coordination of functions to be discharged on a regional basis using the three existing 'CAMP' regions as the regional geographic units as set out on the proposed organisation chart. The functions to be coordinated at regional level will include:

- Communications and Mobilisation (the Director of Operations will have overall responsibility for the national development of the CAMP programme).
- Training and Development (the Director of Operations will have overall responsibility for the national training programme).
- Regional Safety Campaigns (the Director of Safety Programmes will have overall national responsibility in this area).
- Regional Recruitment Campaigns (the Director of Corporate Services will have overall national responsibility in this area).
- Major Event Licensing where it is expedient or requires the involvement of more than one Fire Authority (the Director of Safety Programmes will have overall national responsibility in this area).
- Specialist Rescue Functions providing services to more than one Fire Authority (the Director of Operations will have overall national responsibility in this area).
- Major Emergency Planning and Management (the Director of MEM will have overall national responsibility in this area).
- Voluntary Sector Coordination and Support at a Regional level (the Director of MEM will have overall national responsibility in this area).
- Oversight, facilitation and promotion of Section 59 agreements between Fire Authorities within regions (the Directors of Operations, Safety Programmes and MEM will have national responsibility for their respective functional remits within which Section 59 agreements may arise).

5.38 The Chief Executive and the four Directors should comprise the Senior Management Team of the Authority. The Senior Management Team should meet regularly to plan and oversee the operation of the Authority and to organise the servicing of the Board and the Committees of the Authority. The Senior Management Team should also coordinate the processes whereby the Authority will:

- Produce 3 year rolling Corporate Plans.
- Develop annual and multiannual work programmes.
- Produce an annual report to the Minister, and through him, to the Houses of the Oireachtas, reviewing and reporting on the work of the Authority as well as on the issues arising from on-going monitoring of the performance of Local Fire Authorities.
- Produce periodic reports on thematic reviews of the key areas coming within the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services remit.

- Develop and report on targets and performance indicators for the regime as a whole with a particular emphasis on reductions in fires, death, injury and loss from fire and other emergencies, and for promotion, awareness and education programmes.
- Report on significant incidents and use them as learning experiences to inform both safety and operational development.
- Implement a structured programme of research and development.

5.39 The funding for the Authority should be provided, in the main, by Central Government and the Authority should have its own separate budgetary provision in the Vote for the Department of the Environment and Local Government. However, there are, we believe, mechanisms whereby aspects of the new regime can be self-financing and whereby other parties, who are beneficiaries of the services provided, should contribute to the costs involved. We deal, therefore, more definitively with the issue of funding under a later sub-section of our recommendations.

5.40 Key new developmental and expanded roles for the Authority are separately dealt with in subsequent sub-sections of our recommendations because they merit detailed commentary and recommendations in their own right as integral parts of the new regime. In the immediate paragraphs below, therefore, we set out in broad terms only the main functions to be discharged by the four Directorates of the Authority.

The Operations Directorate

5.41 The Operations Directorate will be responsible and accountable for the following main functions:

- Devising, rolling out and monitoring the application by Fire Authorities of a new risk-based approach to fire cover standards (see later recommendations).
- Overseeing the development and implementation of the communications and mobilisation programme.
- Coordinating the approach to specialist rescue operations and other specialist operational and equipment requirements.
- Developing best practice procedures and guidelines on operational issues to include facilitating and monitoring their application at regional and Local Fire Authority levels.
- Monitoring and reporting on the operational performance of Local Fire Authorities.
- Developing and rolling out a new national training programme (see later recommendations).
- Undertaking research and development functions to include trend analysis.

5.42 In addition to the foregoing main functions, the Operations Directorate should have responsibility for regional coordination of the Eastern Region. Given the scale and complexity of the Eastern Region, the staff in the Directorate may have to be assigned sub-regional coordination responsibilities for the greater Dublin area, North Leinster and South Leinster. Such sub-regional coordination requirements are unlikely, however, to arise in the Mid-Western / Southern and Western regions.

The Safety Programmes Directorate

5.43 The Safety Programmes Directorate will be responsible for the following main functions:

- Developing national programmes and monitoring performance in relation to building control implementation. The Directorate will also be responsible for liaison with and providing input to the policy sections in the Department dealing with the building regulation / standards and planning issues as well as with the Building Regulations Advisory Body (see later recommendations).
- Promotion, awareness and education, – in this regard, the Authority will take over the function of developing the functions and programmes involved from the National Safety Council. It should also take over the budget for this work. However, when it comes to the actual running of media campaigns (nationally and locally) and the production of promotional and educational materials, there are specialist skills involved. We do not see the Authority as necessarily resourcing itself internally in such specialist skills areas. The Authority could out-source this work either to the private sector or to the National Safety Council based on a clear Service Level Agreement and financial contract.
- Establishing and developing a new Community Fire Safety programme and facilitating and monitoring its implementation at local level (see later recommendations).
- Developing guidelines of best practice and monitoring and reporting on enforcement of the licensing regime.
- Public Safety Liaison including developing, coordinating and rolling-out a clear Memorandum of Understanding with the Health and Safety Authority which will clearly set out the respective roles of the two bodies and deal definitively with the issues of who is responsible for, and who is doing what, in relation to inspection of places of employment, petrol stations, fuel and hazardous substance stores, SEVESO sites, etc.
- Monitoring the performance of local Fire Authorities in undertaking safety programmes.

5.44 In addition to the foregoing functions, the Safety Programmes Directorate will have responsibility for regional coordination for the Mid-Western / Southern region.

Major Emergency Management Directorate

5.45 The Major Emergency Management Directorate will have responsibility for the following main functions:

- Developing, rolling out and monitoring the implementation of an updated process for Major Emergency Management (see later recommendations).
- National Emergency Management coordination (see later recommendations).
- International liaison in relation to representation of Ireland in the EU Civil Protection arena.
- Partner Emergency Service Liaison including the servicing of the standing Committee in that regard. A key function in this area will be drawing up and implementing a regime for interaction between the Authority/Local Fire Authorities and the partner emergency services based on clear Memoranda of Understanding and Service Level Agreements, as appropriate.
- Voluntary sector support and coordination including the facilitation and monitoring of local arrangements in that regard.

5.46 In addition to the functions set out above, the Major Emergency Management Directorate will also be responsible for regional coordination of the Western region.

5.47 Pending a Government decision in that regard, we have not factored Civil Defence functions and staffing into the proposed structure of the Authority. We comment further on this issue under the sub-section on staffing below.

Corporate Services Directorate

5.48 The Corporate Services Directorate will have responsibility for the following main functions:

- Coordinating requirements for capital funding and allocating the capital budget. A key function in this regard will be the development of a regime for out-sourced contracts for the building, appliance and major equipment requirements of the regime (see later recommendations).
- Developing, facilitating and monitoring the implementation of a new Health, Safety and Welfare programme. This function will need to be exercised in close cooperation with Operations Directorate where there will need to be a close tie-in to the training regime (see later recommendations).
- Developmental HR functions roll out and coordination, – these will essentially be in the areas of developing a competency based approach (see later recommendations) to recruitment, retention and career progression, developing and rolling out policies in relation to recruitment, occupational health, welfare programmes in relation to bullying and stress and in the equality area. The HR function recommended for the Authority will concentrate on the developmental side and will work with the LGMSB and Local Authorities in that regard, with the role of the Authority being essentially a professional advisory role. Issues concerned with industrial relations, pay and conditions of Local Authority personnel should, we believe, continue to be dealt with by the Local Government Management Services Board although the Authority should also have an advisory role in that regard.

- Information Technology, – the Directorate should have a key role in identifying and specifying opportunities for Information Technology and Management Information Systems to contribute to efficiency and effectiveness, for coordinating developments and for acting as a champion in this area (see later recommendations). However, we believe that the actual delivery of IT and MIS solutions should continue to be dealt with in association with the Local Government Computer Services Board. The Authority's role should primarily be an identification and specification of needs role allied to acting as coordinator and intermediary between the local Fire Authorities and the LGCSB and, where appropriate as the procurement agency.
- Liaison with the parental Department.
- International relations (other than EU Civil Protection and Safety Standards).

Staffing

5.49 The initial staffing complement recommended for the new Authority comes to 46 posts (including the Chief Executive and the Director posts). The following key points are relevant to our staffing recommendations:

- There are a total of 21 posts currently in the Department dealing with the functions now proposed for discharge by the new Authority. Given the extended range of functions to be discharged by the new Authority, and the deficiencies in the current regime as regards functions not being carried out or which are under-resourced, we believe that a net addition of 25 posts is both minimalist and reasonable for the start-up phase of the new Authority.
- We have not factored into the equation Civil Defence staff. We did not, within our Terms of Reference, have an opportunity to review the staff numbers, roles and functions involved in the Civil Defence area. We understand that some 30 posts may be involved in this area in the Department of Defence at headquarters level. Given the synergies involved with other Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services functions, and if the approach adopted by us in setting out the Authority structure of "double-hatting" posts is followed, we believe, that were the Civil Defence functions to be transferred, the total staffing complement of the Authority would not necessarily come to 76 posts (i.e. the 46 already recommended and 30 transferred from the DOD). This situation would require further detailed examination, however, in the event that the Civil Defence functions are transferred.
- There are means by which funds, other than direct Central Government subvention, could be used to part finance the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime. The issue of the affordability of our recommendations on the staffing of the Authority should await, therefore, our recommendations on funding which are set out later. During the course of the Review, it was put to us that additional funding at national level (i.e. additional costs associated with the Authority) would involve diverting funds which should otherwise be made available to local Fire Authorities. We do not accept that there is an either / or decision involved here and, therefore, also deal further with this issue in the sub-section on funding.

- Our recommendations for the staffing of the Authority represent a minimalist allocation for a start-up operation. Further staffing requirements should be assessed on an ongoing basis based on experience of the new structure in operation.
- While we have a view on the overall staffing level to be initially assigned to the New Authority, we believe that the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team should have flexibility in the deployment of the recommended staffing levels across the four Directorates.

The Regional Level

5.50 The paragraphs above set out our thinking on what is needed at national level in the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime. We now turn to the issues which arose during the Review in relation to the regional level.

5.51 Throughout the Review process, various views were expressed to us as to the need for, and on how, certain functions should be discharged on a regional basis. There was a general level of consensus on the benefits of certain functions being discharged on a regional basis. These ranged from proposals for a formal regional tier and structure to be put in place, to suggestions as to how the cooperative arrangements under the 'CAMP' model could be extended to functions other than communications and mobilisation.

5.52 We looked at a range of options, from the formal to the informal, for dealing with regionalisation issues. The main options examined were as follows:

- Establishing a formal regional tier and structure in the regime based on the existing 'CAMP' regions.
- Establishing a greater number of formal regional entities which might be based on Provinces, the Health Board regions, the Garda Divisions, the Regional Authorities or the functional areas proposed in the consultative document on the National Spatial Strategy.
- Having less formal regional arrangements, essentially using Section 59 agreements, for the discharge of a range of functions to be coordinated and delivered on a regional basis by a small pool of regional staff under a Regional Fire Chief.
- Coordinating certain functions at regional level through the staff of the National Authority using the existing 'CAMP' region Management Committees as the vehicle for so doing.

5.53 As will have been deduced from our earlier recommendations, we decided on the last of the options set out above. We have already set out how we see the system operating in that regard. However, in conducting our examination of the other options, a number of issues arose which, we believe, remain as valid considerations. These are discussed below.

5.54 We are in no doubt that 37 Fire Authorities, ranging from 25,000 to over 1,000,000 population each being staffed and resourced to independently discharge the full range of Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services functions is too many for a country of our size. This fact has been recognised in a number of areas (e.g. the greater Dublin area) and Section 59 agreements are in place in a number of areas to have one Fire Authority carry out functions on behalf of others based on arrangements for the recoupment of the costs involved. We believe that there is scope for the more widespread adoption of this model, in full or in part, between neighbouring Fire Authorities. However, we do not believe that it is desirable to make this a mandatory requirement. It is essentially a matter for local decision by the respective City and County Managers and by the local elected representatives involved.

5.55 We strongly urge that Fire Authorities give due consideration to the potential for greater use of Section 59 agreements at local level. We believe that greater efficiency, effectiveness and savings are realisable in this regard. We especially urge that consideration be given to pooled local arrangements in relation to the following functions:

- Procurement for items not covered by the centralised out-sourced contracts already recommended by us e.g. in relation to smaller equipment items, uniforms etc.
- Building and equipment maintenance where such functions are not capable of being provided from within the wider Local Authority resources.
- The Fire Safety Certification process and certain building control functions where specialist staff in scarce supply are required.
- Fire cover at the extremities of Fire Authority functional areas.
- The possibility of one Fire Authority becoming the contracting authority for the provision of a particular service or services (e.g. training) within a region.

We have been made aware of the limitations of the Section 59 process in the 'CAMP' process. We believe, therefore, that the National Authority will need to promote, oversee and coordinate developments in this area in order to ensure effective implementation.

5.56 A second issue which struck us strongly in our consideration of various regionalisation options is the whole question of how best to respond to the changing demographics, development and other issues likely to impact on fire cover requirements. There are, we believe, some useful guidelines and trends (development hubs, patterns of living and working, transport and access issues etc) involved in the principles behind the National Spatial Strategy consultation document which could usefully and beneficially be taken account of in applying a risk-based approach to the assessment of fire and emergency cover requirements.

5.57 While, therefore, we are not recommending a formalised regional tier at this point in time, we are anxious that key issues which arose during the Review in considering regionalisation options, and which remain relevant, be given serious thought. In addition, we do not believe that the issue of more formalised regional structures should be removed from the agenda. We believe that the issue of a regional tier should be re-examined at a later stage, perhaps, over the same 3 to 5 year timeframe already suggested for reviewing the status and functioning of the Authority itself. There may well be, in the intervening period, organic growth towards regional cooperation in any event under Section 59 agreements.

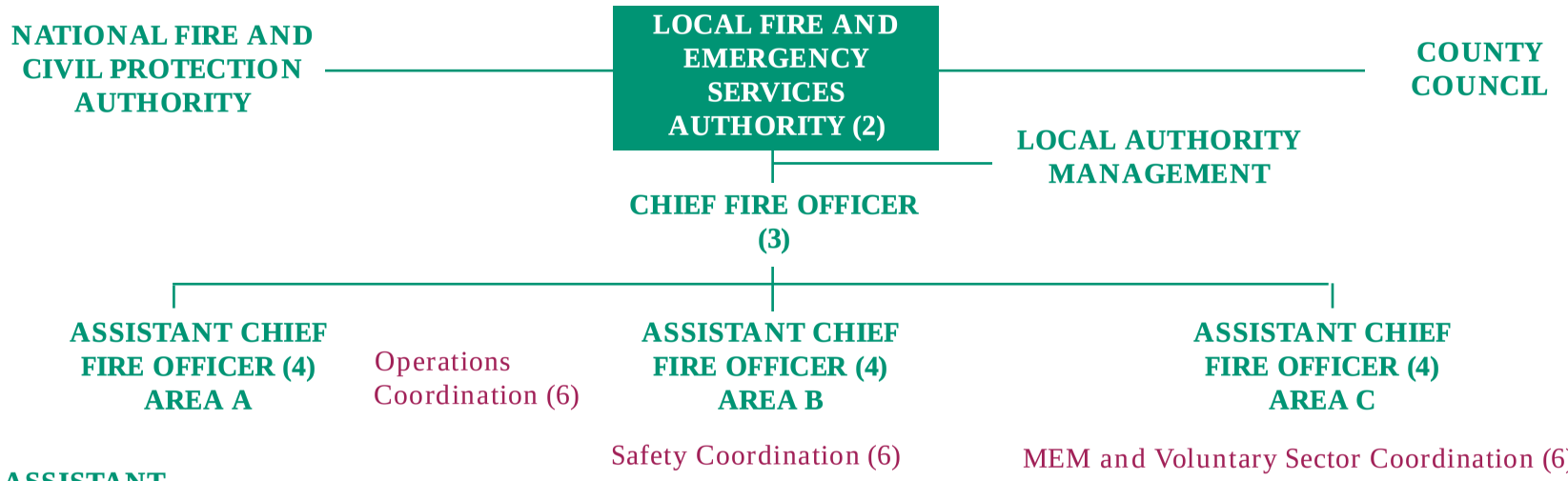
The Fire Authority Level

5.58 We are, subject to the issues and considerations already raised, not recommending any change to the existing statutory role of the local Fire Authorities. In fact, our view on the Fire Authorities is that their role should be extended and strengthened. It would, therefore, be appropriate if, in the instrument(s) establishing the new National Authority, the local Fire Authorities could be redesignated as Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authorities in order to reflect more accurately the roles and functions discharged by them.

5.59 The functional remit of the local Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authorities should be extended to include the following range of functions:

- ☐ The provision of a fire and other emergency response capability.
- ☐ The implementation of a fire prevention regime.
- ☐ The application and continuous review of a new risk-based process for the determination of fire and other emergency cover.
- ☐ Major Emergency Planning and Management including the operation of a new nationally determined process in that regard.
- ☐ Building control implementation including the Fire Safety Certification process.
- ☐ The implementation of the relevant licensing regimes.
- ☐ Implementation of a new Community Fire Safety programme.
- ☐ Implementation of local promotion, awareness and education safety programmes.
- ☐ Responsibility for Civil Defence and other local voluntary sector support and coordination.
- ☐ Liaison at local level with partner emergency services.
- ☐ Liaison at local level with other bodies involved in public safety issues.
- ☐ Development and implementation of local training.
- ☐ Contributing to the discharge of functions to be operated on a regional basis and national basis, including, as appropriate, acting as a contracting authority.
- ☐ Local implementation of centrally designed processes and programmes in relation to procurement, recruitment, health and safety, equality, information technology etc.
- ☐ Provision, as appropriate, and coordination of specialist rescue services e.g. inland waterways etc.
- ☐ Responsibility for the provision and tasking of the Local Authority lifeguard service.
- ☐ The production of formal annual reports and the provision of other statistical and management information on an on-going basis as part of an enhanced accountability regime.

ILLUSTRATIVE LOCAL FIRE AND CIVIL PROTECTION/EMERGENCY SERVICES AUTHORITY STRUCTURE (1)



ASSISTANT FIRE OFFICER (5)

ASSISTANT FIRE OFFICER

BUILDING CONTROL OFFICER

STATION OFFICER

SUB-OFFICER

SUPPORT STAFF

LEADING FIREFIGHTER

FIREFIGHTER

NOTES:

1. For illustrative Purposes Only - Requirements of each Authority will depend on Local Requirements
2. Amalgamates Current Fire Authority and Building Control Authority - should operate on the lines of an SPC
3. Exercises Functions devolved from the authority through the Co Manager
4. Discharges Functions on an Area/Geographic Unit basis
5. Does not allow for unique requirements e.g. District Officer Level in Dublin given its size
6. Each ACFO to have a specific functional coordination role in addition to Area/Geographic unit responsibility
7. Assumes Multitasking and Competency/Training Regime to facilitate promotion irrespective of point of entry
8. Does not allow for Administrative and Other Support Staff (to be determined on an Authority by Authority basis)

FUNCTIONS TO BE DISCHARGED IN EACH AREA/GEOGRAPHIC UNIT (7)

- Fire and Other Emergency Response
- Risk Assessment
- MEM
- Building Control
- Licensing
- Community Fire Safety
- Civil Defence/Voluntary Sector Support
- Training
- Specialist Rescue

- The overall management and administration of the local Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime.

5.60 Many of the functions identified above will be developed and expanded upon in later sub-sections. These sub-sections will also deal with the increased roles in those areas to be discharged by the local Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services Authorities. In addition, we believe that under the new regime Local Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services Authorities should:

- Produce 3 year rolling Corporate Plans which should be reviewed and approved through the relevant SPCs and elected Councils at local level and which should be submitted to the National Authority as part of the performance management regime.
- Develop annual and multiannual work programmes which should also be approved and submitted under a similar process.
- Produce an annual report to the Council which will also be submitted to the new National Authority.
- Set local performance targets in line with performance indicators and guidelines issued by the National Authority.
- Report on significant incidents.
- Produce relevant statistical and other management information to be submitted to the National Authority.

Structures at Local level

5.61 The enhanced remit of the local Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services Authorities will, we believe, dictate that Chief Fire Officers should have, where appropriate, direct delegation of powers, authority, responsibility and accountability to deliver the functions assigned. One of the major difficulties with the current regime is the degree to which such direct delegation is not implemented.

5.62 An illustrative organisation chart for the local level is set out on the page opposite. This chart sets out our vision of how a typical Authority would be structured at local level. Careful attention should be paid to the notes provided on the chart. This standard chart will need to be modified as appropriate to meet the needs of the different Local Authorities.

5.63 The main changes which we believe are necessary as regards the grading structure is the introduction of a Leading Fire-fighter grade in both the full-time and the retained brigades and the enabling of recruitment of Building Control Officers from appropriate backgrounds as well as dropping the absolute requirement for degree-level graduate qualifications (see later recommendations). The Leading Fire-fighter grade is, we believe, necessary because of the new approach we envisage for career progression, the new regime which will apply as regards validated and accredited training and to provide for expanded functions at brigade level in relation to Community Fire Safety, Health and Safety etc. Widening the eligibility requirement for the recruitment of Building Control Officers is necessary because of the expanded functional remit in the building control implementation area and to deal with current poor performance in achieving building control inspection targets in some areas.

5.64 Otherwise, as regards structures within the local Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authorities, it will be a matter of applying the general principles outlined in this report to the unique circumstances which apply in each existing Fire Authority. Amongst the key issues which will require to be addressed in this regard are:

- The Fire Authority structures at local level should mirror the integrated and unified structure recommended for the Authority at national level. In the case of local Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authorities, this will mean that all grades and classes of staff will report within a structure which comes fully under the Chief Fire Officer. This will be an important issue into the future in that the expanded remit of the regime and the additional functions involved may mean that staff from an administrative background will be working under the Chief Fire Officer.
- Those Fire Authorities which currently do not have responsibility for all aspects of building control enforcement will need structures and staffing to carry out these functions under the new arrangements.
- Similarly, those Fire Authorities which do not have responsibility for Civil Defence will need structures and staffing for this purpose.
- All Fire Authorities will need to factor a new emphasis on Prevention, Mitigation, Promotion, Awareness, Education and Community Fire Safety into their structures and staffing arrangements. In this regard, however, it should be borne in mind that we recommend that staff at all levels in the full-time and in the retained service be engaged in these functions.
- We deal more fully with the staffing issues involved in the next sub-section.

Full-Time Staffing at Local Level

5.65 The requirements for changes in full-time staffing complements at local Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authority level will essentially be driven by the following key considerations:

- The setting and monitoring of targets for building control implementation and for licensing enforcement, the extent of activity in each area in relation to the Fire Safety Certification process and any other changes which may come about in the building control regime.

- Setting and achieving targets for inspection and enforcement under the Fire Services Act, 1981 and the Building Control Act, 1990.
- The issues which will arise from the application of a new risk-based approach to the setting of fire cover standards.
- The extension of the role of local Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services in relation to Community Fire Safety and general prevention, awareness and education programmes.
- The implications of transferring new functions to the local Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authorities for example, Civil Defence, Inland Waterways Search and Rescue etc.
- The impact of introducing greater levels of performance monitoring, reporting and accountability into the regime.

5.66 Deciding on the levels of staffing needed is primarily a matter for each Local Authority and will require that a detailed analysis of requirements be undertaken on foot of this Review by each Local Authority. Such detailed Local Authority by Local Authority analysis has not been possible within the confines of this Review. However, we set out below our views on the key issues and trends likely to be involved arising from the considerations set out in paragraph 5.65 above.

5.67 In the areas of building control implementation and of licensing enforcement generally, we expect that the following will be the key staffing considerations involved:

- In some Local Authorities the transfer of building control implementation to the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services side will require that existing staff be transferred.
- For Local Authorities unable currently to meet inspection targets and to operate a satisfactory enforcement regime some additional staffing will be required. This may require some additional senior level posts. However, requirements in this area are likely to be met in the most part, by a more flexible approach to recruitment of Building Control Officers as already referred to earlier.
- There is significant potential to make greater use of existing staff resources in the enforcement area.
- Other issues will arise in this area and are dealt with under the separate sub-section on building control set out later.
- We believe that staffing and other expenditure in this area should be self-financing and we, therefore, deal further with this area in our funding recommendations.

5.68 In the area of introducing a new risk-based approach to fire cover standards, we expect that the following key staffing considerations will arise:

- We do not expect the new approach, as already pointed out, to lead to wholesale requirements for new full-time fire stations. It is, however, likely that, on a localised basis, the number of appliances, crew and response capability/cover provided by existing stations in particular areas will need to change in a small percentage of cases.

- The regime in relation to a new approach to risk assessment and cover requirements will need to set down, at an early stage in the process, the metrics (number of call-outs, risks in the area etc) which will determine the stage at which a fire station will require a full-time Station Officer, will need to move to day-manning or will need to convert to full-time operation. It will be a matter for the National Authority to devise those metrics as part of drawing up the process for applying the recommended new risk-based approach to fire cover standards (see later recommendations).
- In the Eastern Region, the issue of fire-fighting personnel being allocated to control room manning will need to be reviewed as pressures increase for greater full-time fire-fighting personnel in the field and as other flexibility requirements arise in putting new structures and work practices in place.

5.69 In the area of the new Community Fire Safety and general promotion, awareness and education programmes, we expect that the bulk of the staffing issues arising will be dealt with through making more effective use of existing full-time and retained personnel.

5.70 In the area of transfer of new functions (Civil Defence etc) we expect that the following staffing issues will arise:

- For those Local Authorities where Civil Defence does not currently come within the ambit of the Fire Service the issue of transfer of existing staff may arise.
- For those Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services Authorities affected, specialist teams may have to be developed for Inland Waterways Search and Rescue.
- Otherwise, we do not expect that any major additional staffing requirements will arise under the transfer of functions heading.

5.71 As regards performance monitoring and other reporting requirements, the most likely issue to arise will be the scarcity of administrative and other support staff in some local Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services Authorities. However, we expect that the potential of IT and MIS systems is capable of making a significant contribution in this area (see later recommendations).

5.72 In summary, our views and recommendations on full-time staffing at local level are as follows:

- We do not expect any major overall increase in full-time staffing.
- Many of the requirements which will arise in that regard should be fully self-financing.
- As an early step in the implementation process arising from this Review, Local Authorities should be required to review their staffing requirements in the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services functions on the basis of the issues set out in this sub-section and to report to the National Authority on the outcome of such reviews. In conducting such reviews, Local Authorities should be asked to have regard to and report on the potential of Section 59 agreements to contribute to efficiency, effectiveness and cost savings on the staffing side.

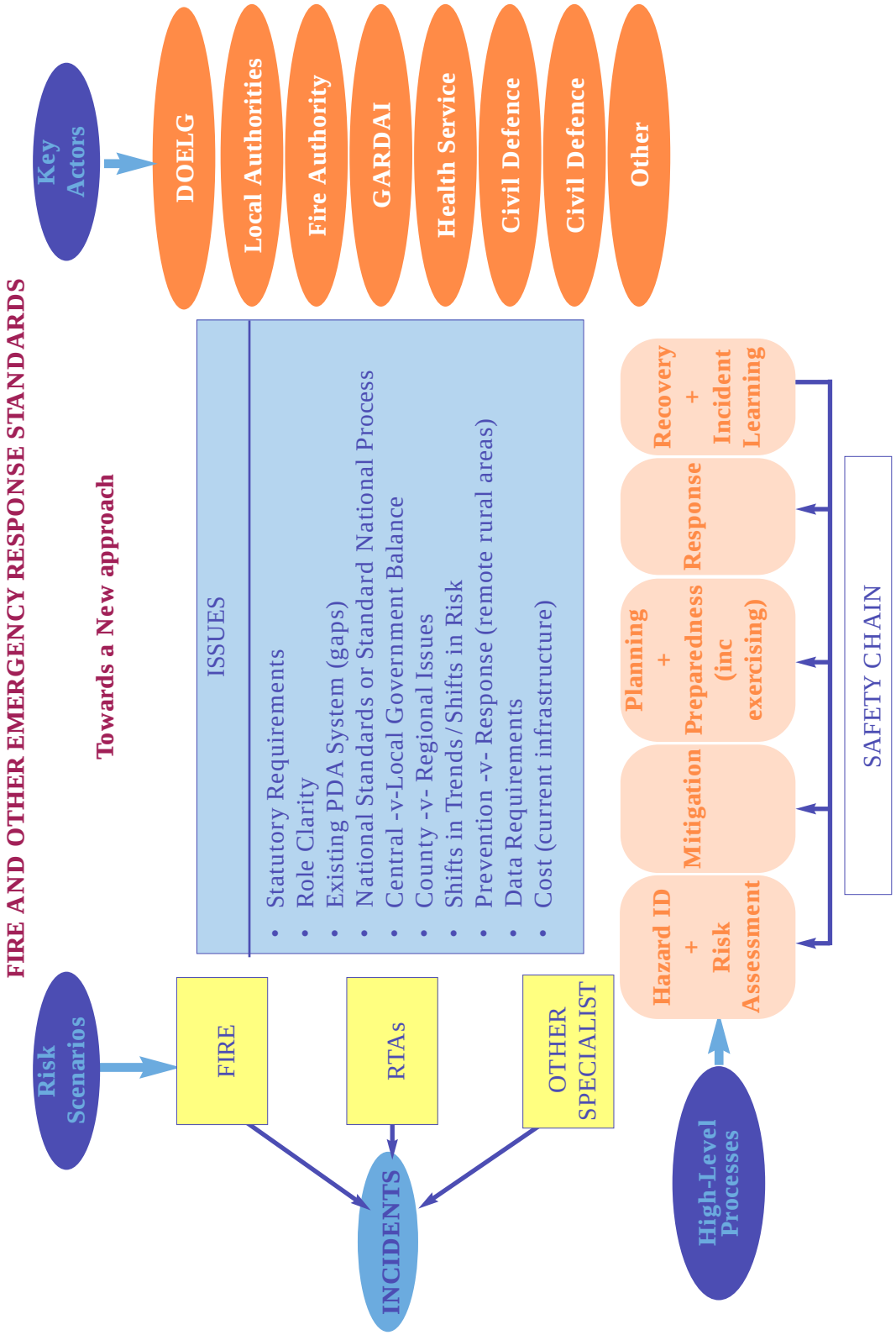
- There are examples of best practice within the existing regime in some of the areas covered by this sub-section of our Report. It would not be appropriate to identify the Fire Authorities involved. However, we have seen, for example, how, with existing resources, individual Fire Authorities have developed effective approaches to monitored self-compliance in relation to the fire safety management of multiple occupancy buildings and to a structured regime of during performance inspections. The new National Authority should play a role in identifying and disseminating such best practice models throughout the overall Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services regime.

The Retained Service

5.73 We believe that the retained service will continue to play a vital role in the overall regime. However, its capacity to do so is currently under threat from difficulties in recruitment, retention and securing release from employers of personnel in the retained service. A concerted programme of support and development for the retained service will be necessary if it is to continue to play its much needed role in the regime.

5.74 Our main recommendations in relation to the retained service are as follows:

- A reappraisal of fire cover standards under the recommended new risk-based approach should consider the extent to which some element of relaxation of the existing requirements to live and work within a mile of the station could be introduced without compromising cover.
- A more flexible regime of availability should be introduced. The concept of limited availability should apply wherein people could join the retained service based on guaranteed availability which need not necessarily be for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.
- The competency, training and career progression regime should, as previously recommended, allow for the creation of a new Leading Fire-fighter grade and also strengthen and facilitate the possibilities for Fire-fighters in the retained service to progress into the full-time service should they so wish. We believe that the separate grade of driver/mechanic should be phased out. Driving skills do not in our view, contribute a discrete competency set which would determine the need for a separate grade level. This recommendation is made without prejudice to any pay negotiations which may need to take place in relation to the duties involved.
- Personnel in the retained service should be offered more varied work opportunities and experiences through involvement in Community Fire Safety, education and awareness programmes and in certain areas of enforcement.
- The training regime (see later recommendations) should evolve such that retained Fire-fighters will have adequate access to validated and accredited training which will not disadvantage them relative to those in the full-time service.


FIRE AND OTHER EMERGENCY RESPONSE STANDARDS
Towards a New approach
Key Actors
DOELG
Local Authorities
Fire Authority
GARDAI
Health Service
Civil Defence
Civil Defence
Other
ISSUES
• Statutory Requirements
• Role Clarity
• Existing PDA System (gaps)
• National Standards or Standard National Process
• Central -v-Local Government Balance
• County -v- Regional Issues
• Shifts in Trends/Shifts in Risk
• Prevention -v- Response (remote rural areas)
• Data Requirements
• Cost (current infrastructure)
Risk Scenarios
FIRE
RTAs
OTHER SPECIALIST
INCIDENTS
High-Level Processes
Hazard ID + Risk Assessment
Mitigation
Planning + Preparedness (inc exercising)
Response
Recovery + Incident Learning
SAFETY CHAIN

- The recent improvement in the capital programme should be maintained such that Fire-fighters in the retained service will have reasonable expectations that station facilities and equipments are brought up to minimum quality standards as quickly as possible. The new National Authority should have responsibility for developing a planned programme in that regard.
- The varying standards and practices between Local Authorities should be brought up to minimum quality standards in all areas and practices whereby retained Fire-fighters are not provided with dress uniforms or are required to work with less than adequate personal protection equipment should be discontinued.
- Retained personnel should not have to undertake the driving of emergency vehicles in situations where their personal driving records and insurance premiums are put at risk. This issue also needs to be addressed in the full-time service.
- A concerted national and local programme of interactions with employers should be undertaken in order to influence the agenda in relation to retained personnel experiencing difficulty in getting time off work for call-outs and training.
- While we deal later with the general issue of equality. A positive campaign is needed nationally and locally to attract more female candidates into the service.

5.75 During the course of our Review an array of other issues were brought to our attention which fall into the category of pay and conditions of service which are outside the scope of our Terms of Reference or which are otherwise incapable of being dealt with in a Review of this nature. These relate, in the main, to issues of the mandatory retirement age, the standards set for the medical examination, the situation as regards pensions and gratuities and the operation of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs regime in relation to unemployment benefit. While the substantive issues involved here are matters for other fora, there is an aspect to some of these issues which should be resolved as part of the Review outcome. In this regard, one of the major frustrations for Fire-fighters is the variability of practice between Local Authorities and the lack of uniform application of rules and regulations. An already difficult situation is, therefore, continuously exacerbated by grievances arising from inequality of treatment. Such inequality of treatment should be dialled out of the system.

5.76 It would be difficult to understate the impact of low morale within the retained service on local service delivery and on local recruitment to the Service. Given the localised nature of the retained service, example and word of mouth are critical issues impacting on recruitment. Building the morale of the Service, presenting it in a more professional light and generally improving its profile will, we believe, be as effective, if not more effective, than national and local advertising-based recruitment campaigns in tackling the recruitment problems which are now emerging.

Risk-Based Approach to Fire Cover

5.77 The framework used by us to evaluate the current approach to standards of fire cover and to developing recommendations in this area is set out in diagrammatic form on the page opposite. The key issues arising from this framework of analysis are as follows:

- There is a range of risk scenarios related to fire, road traffic accidents and other specialist rescue situations which can be identified and analysed as regards cover requirements. When things go wrong, incidents varying in their scale, arise to which the Fire Service responds.
- In dealing with the risk scenarios there is a range of high-level processes, commonly referred to as the safety chain, which need to be implemented. These are hazard identification and risk assessment, mitigation, planning/preparedness, response and recovery (including closing the loop by feeding incident learning back into the process).
- There are a number of key actors involved in the fire cover standards setting process as set out in the diagram.
- The diagram also summarises the issues addressed in this area in earlier sections of our report.

5.78 A key feature of the approach to fire cover standards to date in Ireland has been the situation whereby the statutory responsibility for determining cover standards and for providing response capability rests with the local Fire Authorities. There are no national norms of standards to which Fire Authorities must comply. There is no structured audit or performance monitoring of the cover standards or response capability provided by Fire Authorities under the current regime.

5.79 The first issue we had to consider, therefore, was whether or not we should move to a system of mandatory national standards with which local Fire Authorities would have to comply. We decided against this approach believing that local Fire Authorities should continue to have the statutory responsibility for determining cover and response requirements.

5.80 We do, however, believe that, in determining fire and emergency cover standards, Fire Authorities should be guided by and conform to a process, determined at national level, by the recommended national Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authority using a risk-based approach. We also believe that the National Authority should not only devise the process to be used, but that it should assist and monitor its application by local Fire Authorities. Fire Authorities should have to comply on a mandatory basis with the process for determining fire and emergency response cover.

5.81 As previously mentioned, the international consultants, ENTEC, who are specialists in this area, were brought on board the Review process to help us develop a new approach to the process for determining cover standards. In the paragraphs which follow, we set out the main features of the new approach.

5.82 The current basis of Fire Cover in Ireland has been described as "ad hoc" but many Fire Authorities aspire to meet the requirements of the UK categories A to D and Remote Rural in terms of response time and weight of attack. However, there is no information to show the extent to which these requirements are being achieved.

5.83 Driven in part by the need to ensure the safety of their Fire-fighters, and in part by best value considerations, the UK is moving towards a totally risk-based approach to fire cover and levels of response. Risk assessment is also used to identify where additional fire prevention measures are required to reduce risks to tolerable levels. These measures are likely to include fire safety engineering solutions and community education projects. The UK has spent six years moving from the area classification to the risk-based approach and the process is not yet complete. As Ireland has not yet fully applied the old UK standards, there is concern that the move to a fully risk-based approach in Ireland could take even longer and a more pragmatic approach will, therefore, be required to ensure more rapid progress on a phased basis.

5.84 The logical approach to fire cover is, we believe, to base the provision of Fire Service resources on the demand in the area served by each Fire Authority, with fire stations, personnel and equipment distributed and operating in a prevention as well as a response mode in order to reduce the loss of life and property (from incidents to which the Fire Service responds). In order to plan this provision, it is necessary to have information on the existing distribution of risk from the relevant risk scenarios.

5.85 Data is required on the frequency of fires (and other emergencies) in buildings of different types, the number of people who may require rescue and the value of property (and other costs of a loss) in order to determine the level of risk to which the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Service has to respond.

5.86 In the UK, historical information has been used to ascertain the risk from ordinary dwellings in each area as well as common events such as road traffic accidents in each area. However, some properties such as HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation), large shops, office complexes and factories have a potential for high losses. Because they are small in number in any area, they may not have a statistically significant record over the last few years to make a satisfactory estimate of risk. In such cases, information has to be gathered on a national or even international basis in order to use predictive techniques for incidents that may not have occurred before (or have occurred infrequently). Data must include the circumstances involved so that the risks predicted are appropriate for the engineering (design / construction), environmental and social features of an area.

5.87 When the risk (either nationally or in a particular area) has been assessed, then there needs to be a standard against which it is judged. Is it so low that most would regard it as trivial and of little concern (such as the risk of being killed by lightning)? Or is it so high that it must

be reduced no matter how costly (for example the risks to some offshore oil industry workers at the time of the Piper Alpha disaster)? In most cases, risks fall between these extremes and society (represented by politicians) decides to spend money to reduce the risks until further expenditure is "grossly disproportionate" to the benefits gained. This is a restatement of the "ALARP" principle that risks should be As Low As Reasonably Practicable.

5.88 The setting of the intolerable level of risk and the negligible level of risk needs to consider both the risks to an individual (Individual Risk of Death) and the risks of multiple fatality incidents. Generally, the areas at highest risk would be targeted for the first risk reduction measures but if money was a constraint, then the priority might be set by looking for "best value". In this case "best value" would mean the most lives saved per million pounds spent.

5.89 In some cases it may not be possible to reduce risks below a set intolerable level by fire cover alone and additional fire safety measures may need to be considered, or education projects undertaken. (Specific data needs to be collected to determine the effectiveness of education and awareness programmes. Safety programme effectiveness can be assessed using reliability assessment techniques).

5.90 Using the foregoing approach, it will be obvious that any movement towards an optimum distribution of fire stations, personnel and equipment must be incremental, starting from the current situation and determining the cost effectiveness of each change. An important part of the final system is the collection of data to monitor both the effectiveness of the arrangements made and to identify any trends in the risks from fire. A national approach would also imply a form of national audit or monitoring to ensure that the system works as intended to provide an equitable distribution of service and risk.

5.91 A fundamental question which arises in the Irish context is whether or not there is sufficient data to establish a baseline from which future developments can be planned. Unlike the UK, where a uniform FDR1 report form has been in place for many years, a national incident report form has only recently been agreed in Ireland. Having reviewed the form, we believe that it may need some amendments, including data on the numbers of people originally present and the number of persons rescued by the Fire Service, (in addition to recording casualties) to fulfil the complete data collection requirements.

5.92 National figures on causes of death should provide some basic data on the risks from fire. While insurance companies may be prepared to reveal general data on the incidence of fire and property losses amongst their clients, this may not give comprehensive coverage of all buildings. Garda and NRA data may be available on road accidents. The aim of the data collection exercise should be to build up a picture of the risk from fire and other incidents, its geographical distribution and its variation with different types of property. It may be possible to use data from those areas with more comprehensive data to estimate national figures for different types of property, for example:

- Dwellings split into age and categories such as:
  - Single storey
  - Terraced
  - Semi-detached
  - Detached
- Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs):
  - Bedsits
  - Hostels
  - Purpose built flats
  - Houses converted to flats
- Hotels (possibly divided by age)
- Shops, offices, factories
- Special Services:
  - RTAs
  - Underground / confined space rescues
  - Water rescues / Flooding calls
- Major Incidents:
  - Seveso II sites
  - Railways, Aircraft, Ships, etc.

5.93 Data collection should also include numbers of false alarms (both malicious and good intent) as these could have an effect on the availability of fire cover due to the demand on the Service.

5.94 If the data above is available, at least at a national level, or in a large area covering the range of building types, then it will be possible to build a picture of the national risk from fire (and other incidents) and the variability involved. The areas where there is insufficient data could be categorised by building type, socio-economic categories, or other parameters to establish the relevance of the information from areas where more complete data is available. These categories would involve an expansion of the categories described in the old UK A-D classification system but more related to the likelihood of fire and the possibility of its spread. There should always be a method for validating any extrapolated risk figures or those transferred from other areas / situations. As a minimum, the reasonableness of risk estimates should be checked with information such as the number of call-outs.

5.95 In order to set the limits on tolerability of risk from fire and other incidents, it may be adequate to consider the level of satisfaction of the public (and their representatives) with the Fire and Rescue Services currently provided and the recent history of fire and other deaths. The current national average risk may indicate a “tolerable level”, although setting this as a criteria would imply that additional resources should be available in areas above the national average.

5.96 Guidance on setting a negligible level of risk can be obtained from sociological and psychological studies. Care should be taken when comparing risks of a voluntary nature, or those deemed to be "natural events" with those arising from human activity. People are more unwilling to accept risks imposed on them by others (e.g. a Seveso II plant) from which they perceive no direct benefit, than they are to accept higher, voluntary risks from which they believe they benefit (e.g. car driving or sporting activities).

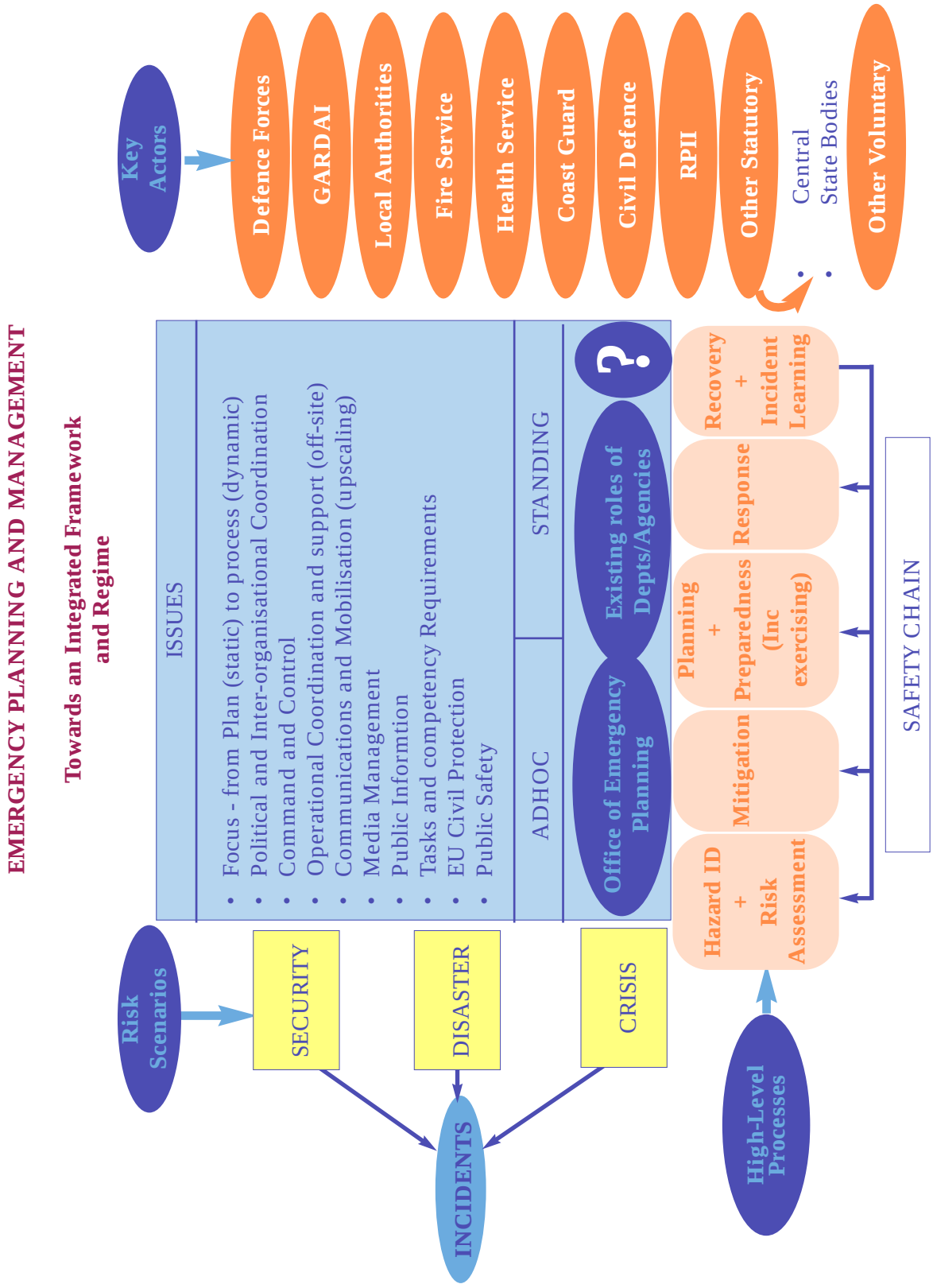
5.97 A risk based categorisation, as suggested above, should be developed and then tested (trialled) in at least two areas initially. One of these should be an area of good data and another should be an area where a categorisation of buildings and other risks requires the transfer of data from other sources. This would test the feasibility of assessment both in terms of accuracy and demands on Fire Service time. (It should be noted that in the UK a considerable benefit is gained from fire safety inspections and familiarisation visits, both of which can be used to gain information to produce a risk assessment, particularly of larger buildings.) A points based assessment system has been developed so that the risk assessment can be modified, depending on the findings of such inspections, thus, increasing or decreasing the estimate of risk depending on the particular features present.

5.98 The steps involved may be summarised as follows:

- Collect and Review National Data.
- Review data available on different building types and the incidence of fire (Recognising that some unusual buildings will always require individual assessment).
- Develop a categorisation of building types to reflect risk.
- Establish national criteria for Intolerable Risk and Negligible risk from fire and other incidents.
- Survey at least two representative areas (one with and one without detailed data) to establish feasibility of risk assessment.
- Review costs and benefits, alongside practicalities of using the method.

5.99 Our recommendations in this area may be summarised as follows:

- The new National Authority should develop a risk-based process for determining fire and emergency response cover on the broad lines of the principles and steps set out above.
- However, in developing the process the Authority should look at other risk-based approaches. For example, we were impressed with the process used in The Netherlands when we visited The Hague during the Review.
- The process, once developed and tested, should be applied by all Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services Authorities at local level.
- The National Authority should assist, oversee, monitor and report on progress / issues arising from the application of the process.


EMERGENCY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT
Towards an Integrated Framework and Regime
Key Actors
Defence Forces
GARDAI
Local Authorities
Fire Service
Health Service
Coast Guard
Civil Defence
RPII
Other Statutory
Central
State Bodies
Other Voluntary
ISSUES
Focus - from Plan (static) to process (dynamic)
Political and Inter-organisational Coordination
Command and Control
Operational Coordination and support (off-site)
Communications and Mobilisation (upscaling)
Media Management
Public Information
Tasks and competency Requirements
EU Civil Protection
Public Safety
ADHOC
STANDING
Office of Emergency Planning
Existing roles of Depts/Agencies
?
Risk Scenarios
SECURITY
DISASTER
CRISIS
INCIDENTS
High-Level Processes
Hazard ID + Risk Assessment
Mitigation
Planning + Preparedness (Inc exercising)
Response
Recovery + Incident Learning
SAFETY CHAIN

Movement towards the new risk-based approach will have to be approached on a phased basis over time. The objective should be to develop a high-level approach wherein immediate changes can be targeted for implementation over a 2-3 year timeframe, with more detailed implementation / development over a longer period.

Major Emergency Management

5.100 The diagram on the page opposite sets out the framework which we used to analyse the current situation and develop recommendations in relation to the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime's role in relation to Major Emergency Management. While the subject matter is somewhat different and wider, it should be noted that the key aspects of the framework are essentially the same as those which apply in the fire and other emergency response regimes. This reflects the fact that the competencies and approaches required in the MEM area are essentially specialist emergency service competencies and approaches.

5.101 The following key features of the framework should be noted:

- The risk scenarios fall into three major categories viz Security (e.g. acts of terrorism including chemical and biological threats etc), Disasters (e.g. rail crash, fire in a multiple occupancy building etc) and Crises (e.g. a disease outbreak etc). In this Review we are clearly only dealing with incidents arising from these scenarios which require a "blue light" response involving the Fire Service.
- The high level processes are essentially the same as for fire and other emergency response functions and are based on the same safety chain concept.
- There is a wide range of actors involved. In some cases it is clear who will "own" which type of incident. Many incidents, however, irrespective of the category of origin, will require a "blue light" response.

5.102 Our main recommendations in relation to MEM are as follows:

- The respective emergency services should retain their roles in major emergencies as currently defined. The tripartite structure should receive further definition in the national emergency plan in order to alleviate local ambiguities. At regional and national level, it is essential that one person, the most appropriate from within the relevant services and departments, is nominated to be in overall command of the emergency.
- There is a need to provide more comprehensive practical and desktop training. This training must be standardised and based on requirements determined on a comprehensive risk assessment of potential crisis and emergency scenarios. Where appropriate, training should continue to be delivered at local level and involve all partner emergency services.
- In view of the absence of a national tier with responsibility for local authority MEM preparation, the new Authority will have a co-ordination and facilitative role in relation to planning and preparation within Local Authorities. Through fulfilling this role, the Authority will also act as a single point of contact for the Department of

Defence in the conduct of its new function in overseeing civil emergency planning.

- The new Authority should have the resources, specialist emergency management expertise and remit to identify where gaps in emergency planning exist and to develop the most appropriate measures to address these. Furthermore, national coordination of emergency planning will develop the potential to share resources and thus address differences between counties.
- The new Authority will co-ordinate the development of a national command and control regime for major emergencies relevant to its functional remit.
- The staff of the Authority, will include personnel with a competency in emergency management, planning and implementation who will assist, as required, nominated members of partner emergency services and other relevant departments and agencies.
- There is a need for a national focal point to coordinate the operational response in all large-scale "blue light" emergencies and multi-departmental national crises. In addition to coordinating the initial response, a long-term response, if required, will firstly be developed through having such a focal point in the regime. The new National Authority should provide that focal point.
- It is important that international best practices are evaluated and consulted for the continued development of major emergency planning and for the creation of the national focal point. As major emergency planning is a complex task, it is essential that plans be developed by people with the necessary operational and technical competencies to do so.
- There will be a need for a communications infrastructure required to underpin the resolution of a major emergency, which will provide a service and a standard of emergency capability that is consistent with professional performance standards and which can provide internal and external communications to the required standard including media liaison.

5.103 We believe that the following key actions are required in this area:

- The new Authority should draw up and develop an updated process for MEM and facilitate and oversee its implementation at local and regional level.
- The new process should involve a structured scenario and process based approach to major emergency planning as set out in the earlier diagram.
- The new Authority should develop mechanisms for ensuring that the MEM regime moves from being a static to a dynamic process in partnership with the other relevant emergency services.
- The new Authority should develop proposals, for approval by the parental Department and the other key parties involved, on how the concept of a single focal point for coordination of emergencies on a national scale should develop. Their proposals should deal with the issues of command and control, competency development in the various emergency services, coordination and communications. In this regard, we recommend that the MEM Directorate should study in particular the National Coordination arrangements which exist in The Netherlands, which are

based on an unfortunate experience of a number of major "blue light" disasters in recent years. We were impressed by the Dutch approach to MEM during our visit there as part of the Review process and we believe that Ireland would benefit from putting suitably adapted similar arrangements in place.

Building Control

5.104 Our primary recommendation in relation to building control is that the building control regime should transfer to the new Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authority as part of its critical safety remit. In this regard, we see the functional remit encompassing Section 18 of the Fire Services Act, 1981 as well as Parts A to M of the Building Control Act, 1990. At local level, we believe that building control implementation should come within the ambit of local Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authorities and form part of a new emphasis on prevention and mitigation.

5.105 In order to progress enhancement of the inspection and implementation regime, we are suggesting greater flexibility in recruitment to the Building Control Officer grade. With the introduction of a competency-based recruitment and career progression regime linked to training and development, this new approach will enable those recruited to be absorbed into the unified structure in the Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services Authorities. We have already set out our thoughts on staffing levels in this area and, as stated also, we believe that the additional staffing requirements arising will be self-financing (see also later recommendations on funding). The adoption of the new model recommended for the building control regime will, we believe, lead to more certainty and better career opportunities for the staff involved. However, we realise that movement towards the new model including assessment of the career progression, training and other implications involved will require to be negotiated with the representative bodies and staffing interests involved.

5.106 In conducting this Review, a number of other issues arose in relation to building control. These include:

- A view that the Fire Safety Certification process and on-going sample inspecting of premises does not adequately address the safety requirements. There is a strong view that in addition to the certification of design, there should be during construction inspection, completion certification and greater levels of inspection than at present during use of premises.
- Various suggestions were made as regards how building control functions should be implemented including contracting out inspection, having third-party certification and establishing a national Building Control Authority.

5.107 We regard the foregoing issues as policy issues which will require further detailed examination once the new National Authority is put in place.

Community Fire Safety

5.108 We place great emphasis on developing a new programme on Community Fire Safety and to involving Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Services personnel at all levels in its implementation. We believe that this new programme will represent the cornerstone of a whole new approach, at local level in particular, which will emphasise the prevention and mitigation aspects of the safety chain.

5.109 In addition to implementation activity under the Fire Services Act, 1981 and the Building Control Act, 1990, we see the Community Fire Safety Programme including the key elements set out below. This list is illustrative and will need to be developed as part of the implementation process arising from this Review. Key activities in this regard will include:

- Implementing national, regional and local Community Fire Safety Campaigns.
- Identifying, visiting and advising those at risk on fire safety matters.
- Implementing targeted promotion and education programmes in schools, places of employment, multiple occupancy buildings and private dwellings.
- Maintaining a regular and visible on the ground presence in relation to fire safety issues.
- Providing ongoing advisory, training and support services in relation to fire safety.
- Ensuring the provision of guidance documents and other promotional/advisory literature as well as ICT based materials.

5.110 There will be considerable training and development implications in implementing our recommendations in this regard since we envisage Fire-fighters at all levels in both the full-time and the retained service being involved in the delivery of Community Fire Safety programmes.

5.111 In addition, at local level, we believe that the development and implementation of Community Fire Safety programmes will facilitate important and necessary inputs to other key processes such as risk assessment and pre-fire planning.

A Competency Model

5.112 We believe that the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime should move to a competency-based approach to recruitment, training and development, career progression and performance management. The main benefits which will accrue to the implementation of our recommendations in this regard are:

- Providing the mechanism whereby artificial barriers to promotion will be eliminated. We recommend that the system continue to permit multiple level entry but that career progression within the system, irrespective of point of entry, be based on competencies rather than on qualifications. This will be an important issue not only in unifying the career progression path on the Fire-fighter side but also in integrating those in the prevention / building control area into the regime.
- A targeted training regime which will be aimed at developing clearly specified competencies and which will allow for all staff to work towards promotion.
- A relevant and consistent performance management system.

5.113 There, is however, a considerable task to be undertaken in developing the competency requirements for each level in the structure from Fire-fighter through to Chief Fire Officer (and including those on the prevention / building control sides). This is a key implementation task which will have to be undertaken in partnership with the unions and staff representatives. We were impressed with the approach adopted by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Agency (LFEPA) in this area. We recommend that those charged with implementation of our recommendations in this area should learn from the LFEPA experience rather than set about reinventing the wheel in what is a complex area.

Training

5.114 Our key recommendations in relation to training may be summarised as follows:

- There is a need for a more structured training regime. The training programme should be developed at national level and be delivered at national, local and regional level.
- The training provided should be clearly linked to the competency requirements. In addition, training on the operational side should have a clear emphasis on health, safety and welfare issues for both Fire-fighters and Officers.
- Training should be validated and accredited and should form an integral part of the career progression process.
- Standards of training should be laid down and should be mandatory for undertaking taskings, particularly in relation to operational matters.
- Training at national level should be delivered on a contract basis using the DFB training facility. Implementation of this recommendation will hopefully put to bed the long-standing issue of a National Training Centre.
- Selected local Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services Authorities should be designated as the contracting Authorities for the delivery of regional training programmes.
- Local training should continue to be delivered locally.

5.115 There will be a considerable training requirement arising from this Review process if the core recommendations on a fundamentally new regime for the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services functions are accepted. In addition to training for existing functional responsibilities and operations, a considerable agenda of new functions, new roles and new responsibilities will be involved which will need to be underpinned by quality training delivered directly and through "train the trainers" programmes. Every effort should be made to incorporate the voluntary sector into the training regime given the proposed new functions of the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services regime in relation to voluntary sector support and coordination.

Health, Safety and Welfare

5.116 Health, safety and welfare of Fire-fighters are critical areas requiring urgent attention including dealing with the IR issues currently impeding progress in this area. This is a fundamental issue in that it needs to underpin a whole new approach to operations, training and management. In developing the approach to be adopted, we believe that the Authority could learn much from the UK approach as seen by us on our visit to the LFEPA. As part of the process of introducing a new regime in this area, new programmes in post traumatic stress and critical incident stress management need to be introduced.

Procurement

5.117 We believe that a new approach to procurement is required. We think that there is significant potential to be realised in moving towards out-sourced, roll-over contracts in relation to major procurement items to include:

- The station build, refurbishment and maintenance programme.
- The appliance fleet purchase, replacement and maintenance programme.
- Major equipment including specialist equipment procurement.

5.118 We recommend that the new Authority should develop standard specifications in the foregoing areas in consultation with the local Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Services Authorities. We realise that some progress has already been made in this regard. Once the standard specifications have been agreed, the feasibility of placing national contracts in these areas should be closely examined. Where national contracts are deemed not to be a viable option, then a regional approach should be considered, where appropriate.

5.119 We examined the potential of PPPs for the station build programme. We do not believe that there is an attractive enough proposition involved which could be put to the commercial market. At a local level, however, in specific circumstances, Fire Authorities may wish to explore the issue of co-funding based on multipurpose, multiple use buildings for new stations.

Information Technology (IT)

5.120 As part of our analysis, we highlighted specific areas in relation to IT which we feel are worth examining in more detail. This list is by no means exhaustive and may reflect the limited scope of our Review of IT. The following are our recommendations listed under the main functional areas:

- **Premises Database:** One integrated premises database should be developed containing all premises information including:
  - Details of Certifications.
  - Details of inspections carried out.
  - Pre-fire plans (this needs to allow for an overall pre-fire plan for a block or estate which includes particular premises).
  - Pre-determined attendances.
- We strongly recommend the adoption of the An Post Geo Directory as the standard **address database**. The Fire Services premises data should be cross-referenced to the Geo Directory for address matching and Geo positioning using the Building ID. Access to the Geo Directory should be negotiated with An Post on a nationwide basis, for use by all Fire Authorities. It should be noted that some Local Authorities are already aware of the Geo Directory and have signed up for access to it. It may, therefore, be best to negotiate this through the LGCSB for use by all the Local Authorities.
- **Pre-fire planning:** Pre-fire plans should be an integral part of the Premises database linked via the building ID in the Geo Directory. The ability to maintain and store graphics of site layout and planned organisation of the site in the event of incident, particularly for high risk sites, would also be beneficial. The most important feature of pre-fire plans is the ability to get them to the relevant Fire-fighters when an incident arises. They, therefore, must be stored in a medium that enables quick and easy retrieval.
- **Mobilisation:** The CAMP initiative was put in place to provide a centralised structure for taking incident calls and mobilising the relevant forces to deal with such incidents. This is the area which has received most investment in terms of the application of IT and communications technology. Most of this investment has gone into the communications infrastructure to allow the CAMP centres to communicate with the stations and the appliances being despatched to deal with incidents. There are considerable benefits to be derived from enhancements to the IT systems involved, particularly from the application of GIS (Geographical Information Systems) technology. The key benefits are likely to be in the following areas:

- **Determining Location of Incident:** Considerable administrative effort goes into maintaining address databases around the country. These databases are central to speedily determining the location of any incident. If, as we recommend, An Post's Geo Directory is adopted as the standard address database, An Post will carry out all maintenance. However, given that the Geo Directory is no more than a database, we also recommend than an existing search engine be built 'to sit on top of' the Geo Directory to deal with natural language searching and matching issues.
- The **Geo Directory** has the ability to display the address, or at least the district on a map. This would further assist in identifying the location of incidents.
- Automatic receipt of **Caller ID** for landline calls from Eircom and geographical positioning (GPS or cell ID) for mobiles would help enormously in quickly identifying the location of incidents and help in minimising bogus calls. We understand, however, that privacy of information issues are blocking this access and, therefore, this is a wider public sector issue. If this issue can be overcome, the opportunity exists to link the phone system in to allow automatic searching.
- **Deploying Resources:** Again, GIS has a major application here. If properly implemented, the system could automatically determine the nearest station/appliance based on calculating the optimum route from each station. This would be particularly relevant where the primary attendance station is fully occupied or where the incident is in a grey area on the border of two Authorities. If GIS is adopted as an underlying technology, we strongly recommend that automated Route Planning be considered to plan the route from the selected station to the incident. This will depend on each incident and each station being geo coded.
- **Automated notification** of retained Fire-fighters where needed.
- **Providing information to Fire-fighters in attendance:** The possibility of providing in-cab PC units should be examined. These units could store synchronised copy of premises databases, to enable searches of pre-fire plans. In addition these units would facilitate maps and route plans to be downloaded via the mobile phone network.
- **Tracking progress:** Possible integration with the Garda Tetra project should be examined.
- **Fire reporting** should be part of an integrated database with the fire report linked to the Geo Directory building ID. Reporting could start in the appliance on return to the station.
- An **integrated database** could be designed to be merged on a national basis to allow nationwide statistics to be produced quickly and easily.
- **Management reports and statistics:** GIS demographic type analysis could be used to report on fire incidents.

- **HR & Payroll:** Allowance calculations are complex and warrant a simple feeder system to integrate into Local Authority payrolls. A simple HR database is needed to keep records on full-time and retained Fire-fighters as well as to track skills and training requirements.
- **Rostering:** A suitable package should be sourced for planning shifts and rosters.
- **Vehicle maintenance planning:** A suitable asset management package should be sourced particularly with preventative maintenance planning capability.
- **Budget monitoring & control:** Budget planning aspects are poor. Consideration should be given to developing a budgeting model tailored for Fire Services.

Funding

5.121 The funding implications of the recommendations arising from this Review are obviously a key matter for decision makers. The issues and options which arise in this regard are complex and potentially sensitive.

5.122 The additional costs which will arise will come under a number of headings as follows:

- The additional cost of staff in the new national Authority.
- Additional staffing costs in local Fire and Civil Protection/Emergency Service Authorities.
- Additional costs associated with the development of new programmes.
- Capital costs.
- Investment in training.
- Investment in Information Technology.

5.123 Only some of the foregoing additional costs can be quantified at this stage. Some will depend on detailed reviews of requirements at local level and on local decisions. Neither, is it easy to quantify the benefits involved. Many of the costs which will arise into the future are costs which would have had to be incurred in any event.

5.124 We believe, therefore, that, in the first instance, some key decisions need to be made on the funding model to be adopted. Before turning to the various approaches which might be adopted in that regard, which essentially relate to the non-capital side, we should deal with the issue of capital funding. Our view is that the current level of capital funding needs to be maintained at least over the next 3 to 5 year period. While there will undoubtedly be pressure to reduce the capital spend as the CAMP investment programme winds down, we believe, that such pressures should be resisted. There remains a major catch-up programme to be implemented to bring stations, appliances and equipments up to standard. On the capital side, therefore, our recommendations will not require going outside the current envelope of Exchequer spending, but will require that the enhanced capital provisions made available over the last number of years be maintained at that level for a period ahead. Requirements in this regard should be reviewed on a three year cyclical basis.

5.125 The issues of the non-capital side are more complex. There are a variety of options available for funding the change programme involved. These include:

- Introducing a community service charge to cover the cost of the Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Service regime on the basis that it is an essential service.
- Introducing a levy on the insurance industry to provide a greater level of financial support from the industry in order to help fund the change programme and to contribute to costs on an on-going basis.
- Ring-fencing the income which Local Authorities derive from building control and licensing to fund new staffing and prevention / enforcement programmes. Local Authorities currently have a surplus in this area which goes into the general fund rather than to specific funding of the prevention / enforcement regime. However, given that this income is currently used to fund other activities, the shortfall in those areas should the funds be redirected will have to be addressed.
- Insisting that the insurance industry make a greater contribution to safety, awareness and education programmes which would be more in line with what it contributes to road safety.
- Carrying out certain functions on a commercial basis (i.e. charging for the service provided). Such potential arises in relation to Fire Safety training for industry and in relation to advisory services to Developers, Architects, Engineers etc. on the fire safety and other aspects of the building control regime.

5.126 There are, therefore, a number of options available whereby the change programme could theoretically be implemented with little or no additional cost to the Exchequer. The main mechanisms for achieving this would be the insurance industry levy and / or the introduction of a community charge. We believe that both of these options, either separately or in combination, warrant serious consideration. However, it is unlikely that this approach would enable a cost neutral, from the Exchequer viewpoint, solution to emerge in the short-term.

5.127 If the foregoing options are not felt to be implementable in full, we believe that, at least, the following recommendations should be implemented:

- The building control and licensing regime and the safety promotion programmes, together with the staffing involved, should be clearly self-financing based on fee income and, in addition, the insurance industry contribution to safety promotion should be increased.
- Fire and Civil Protection Agencies should be enabled to develop and sell services (training, advisory services) on a commercial basis.

5.128 Most of the additional staffing costs which will arise in the short-term on the prevention and mitigation sides should be self-financing.

5.129 Many of the other costs are costs which would have arisen in any event and are not directly attributable to this Review. Existing costs are escalating in any event.

5.130 The main additional direct cost in the short-term will be the cost of the additional staff in the National Authority if the self-funding options are rejected. At a net increase of 25 additional posts, we believe that the extra expenditure involved represents exceptional potential value for money given the deficiencies in the current regime and the benefits which will accrue. Depending on the approach taken to the reassignment/transfer of existing staff, and the levels at which various posts in the structure are filled, we believe that the net additional annual cost to the Exchequer will be of the order of IR£2m / 2.54m to IR£3m / 3.81m.

5.131 The tabular statement overleaf sets out our views on the cost and potential saving implications of our recommendations, other than those identified above in relation to capital spending and the cost of additional staff at national level.

	COST ITEM	COMMENT
1.	Additional staff at local level.	Additional staff for prevention/enforcement functions should be largely self-financing through ring-fencing fee income. There should be no major increase in operational staff. The application of the risk-based approach to fire cover standards will ultimately determine the requirements. We expect there to be trade-offs between increases in some areas and savings in other areas. Additional administrative support will be required in some Local Authorities although, we believe that the bulk of requirements should be capable of being met by transfer of existing posts.
2.	Costs associated with the development of new programmes.	The main additional cost will arise from the development and implementation of a new National Strategy for Fire Safety and from the local level implementation of Community Fire Safety Programmes. We believe that whatever about a general levy (see earlier) on the insurance industry, the fire safety programme development should be funded to a much greater degree by the industry. Implementation of the programme should be achieved largely though making better use of the resources already available in the full-time and the retained service.
3.	Major Emergency Management	The main additional cost item will be the costs of staff resources at the national level already covered above (par 5.130). However, we believe that it would be prudent to establish a contingency fund for the relief and recovery phases from major emergency incidents and that this fund might be managed by the National Treasury Management Agency.
4.	Training	There will be a need for a major increase in investment in training. The additional capital spend involved would arise in any event and should be capable of being met by our already recommended approach to the overall capital allocation. The staffing resource implications will partly be met by the provision already made for enhanced staffing at the National Authority level. Otherwise, new training activity requirements will unfold on a phased basis. Delivery of training should continue to be provided in so far as possible through using existing staff as trainers on secondment and rotation programmes.

	COST ITEM	COMMENT
5.	Pay and Conditions	Pay and conditions of service are outside of our ambit. However, it should be acknowledged that there will be cost implications from changes recommended in relation to grading, the introduction of day-manning and limited availability and a variety of other HR-related recommendations. Again such costs will be subject to negotiation and will only emerge on a phased basis over time. It is not possible to estimate these costs at this time.
6.	Abolition of Charges	We believe that incident charges should be abolished. We do not believe that there will be any great financial penalty from implementing this recommendation in that the current charges contribute little to overall costs and are difficult to levy and even more difficult to collect. However, charges should only be abolished in the context of a greater direct contribution from the insurance sector.
7.	Information Technology	Investment in IT is required in any event. However, a specialist IT strategy review will be required before the costs involved can be estimated.
8.	Implementation Support	The substantial implementation programme will require external support. This will arise in relation to the following areas: • Developing a detailed Implementation Plan once overall decisions on the direction for the future have been taken. • Putting the new structures and organisational arrangements in place including the development of new processes to support them. • Developing and rolling out the risk-based approach to fire cover standards. • Undertaking the aforementioned IT strategy review.
9.	Potential Savings	The main areas in which potential savings could arise are as follows: • More and better use of Section 59 Agreements. • Discharging more functions at a regional level. • Making more effective use of existing staff resources at all levels. • Using IT more effectively. • Integrating Civil Defence and Inland Waterways functions in particular into the regime thus capitalising on synergies and offsetting the need for extra Exchequer spending elsewhere (e.g. in relation to communications / mobilisation systems).

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 The full implementation of the recommendations arising from this Review will amount to a very extensive change programme for the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime and a detailed implementation plan will be an imperative in that regard. However, before getting to the detailed implementation planning phase, which is a separate exercise in its own right, certain key decisions are required and certain short-term implementation arrangements need to be put in place. We set out in the paragraphs which follow our views on the immediate steps required.

6.2 We believe that, once he has considered the report, and if he is in agreement, the Minister should announce his intention to accept the main thrust of the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained therein. He should also, in our view, at the same time, announce his intention to establish the new Authority at the earliest possible date. In this way, commitment to the case for change, to the principles which will drive change and to a new vision and expected outcomes from a restructured and reorganised Fire and Civil Protection / Emergency Service regime can be given, we believe, at an early stage without the necessity to commit, up front, to all of the detailed recommendations in our Report.

6.3 We believe that the Minister should publish the report and present the outcome from the Review process as a very positive development for the Fire Safety and Fire Services regime and as a logical extension of the actions he has already undertaken in increasing capital spending and in increasing revenues to fund fire prevention, building control and licensing enforcement activities.

6.4 Following on from the Ministerial announcement, we believe that a structure to oversee immediate implementation steps and planning should be put in place. We believe that a process on the same lines of the Review Advisory Group should be put in place to oversee the implementation until such time as the Board of the new Authority comes on stream. However, we believe the group overseeing implementation might best be chaired by an independent party not representative of any of the key stakeholder interests. This might best be achieved by announcing an interim Chairman for the new Authority pending its formal establishment. Side by side with the Implementation Steering arrangements, the already recommended Partnership Committee should be put in place in order to begin the process of dialogue with staff representatives on implementation issues.

6.5 Once the foregoing steps have been taken, we believe that the next step in the process should be the reconfiguration of existing resources in DoELG in order to put the nucleus of the recommended new structure for the Authority in place as soon as possible. A key issue to be addressed in this regard will be the selection and appointment of the Chief Executive and the filling of the four Director-level posts in the new structure.

6.6 When the Implementation Group and the nucleus of the new central structure has been put in place, it will then be appropriate to move to the more detailed phase of implementation. A number of parallel initiatives will need to take place in that regard as follows:

- Discussions will need to take place with the parties involved in order to bring forward proposals to Government for the transfer of functions identified in the report (e.g. Civil Defence, Inland Waterways, SAR etc.).
- The necessary Ministerial Orders / Statutory Instruments should be put in place to establish the Authority.
- The Board of the new Authority should be appointed.
- External assistance should be brought on board to assist the Implementation Group and the Chief Executive / Chief Executive designate to develop a detailed implementation plan. This should amount, we believe, to a 4-6 week project.

6.7 From that point in the implementation process onwards the approach and phasing of implementation will be driven by the detailed Implementation Plan. This Implementation Plan will need to include the following elements:

- A scoping statement defining the implementation project initiation steps, project deliverables and project outcomes.
- A work breakdown structure identifying each discrete change management project and describing for each project the high level tasks involved.
- An implementation structure identifying the roles and responsibilities of various parties including task forces and work groups assigned to particular tasks.
- Gantt charts describing detailed project by project tasks and activities, sequencing, time frames for completion, interrelationships / dependencies and responsibilities for delivery.
- A risk matrix dealing with the probability and impact of certain events, setting out risk categories and describing action plans for amelioration.
- A cost profile setting out the detailed and phased programme of costs involved.
- A communications plan for the roll-out phase and for ongoing internal and external communications in relation to implementation.
- A reporting cycle for monitoring, reviewing and reporting on progress.