

**Local Working Agreement  
&  
Memorandum of Understanding**

**Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service**

**and**

**Hereford and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service**

**on**

**Fire Investigation**

## Background

The Fire and Rescue Services of Shropshire (SFRS) and Hereford & Worcestershire (HWFRS) have, since the formation of the Local Arson Task Force in 2001, had a close working relationship in the field of fire investigation and arson reduction. The services have engaged in joint training which has included police colleagues since their boundaries are coterminous with those of West Mercia Constabulary, as well as sharing information and knowledge informally between fire investigation lead officers.

In April 2005, the Regional Management Board Fire Investigation Project Manager tabled a regional proposal for the sharing of resources amongst all five regional fire and rescue services. In November 2005, however, West Midlands Fire Service tabled a proposal which involved their officers taking the lead throughout the region, with a financial cost to each of the other FRS in the region of £30,000 per annum.

Whilst this proposal demonstrated a significant advantage to two FRS, both SFRS and HWFRS are not convinced of the full value of this proposal and have agreed to hold a “watching brief” whilst the other regional partners consider their options. As a consequence, SFRS and HWFRS will continue to work together on fire investigation related issues, through a more formalised agreement.

## Regional Collaboration

SFRS and HWFRS will continue to support and attend meetings of the Regional Fire Investigation Forum which formed one of the key outcomes of the WMRMB Fire Investigation Project. Meetings are arranged on an ad hoc basis, approximately every six months and operate within agreed documented guidelines.

SFRS and HWFRS currently have available to them, from West Midlands Fire Service, the services of an accelerant detector canine. There is currently no charge for the use of this facility, and both SFRS and HWFRS will continue to call upon this specialist support as and when required. Should charging arrangements be varied in future both services will consider their own usage policies as appropriate.

## Local Collaboration

HWFRS will continue to offer training in fire investigation to West Mercia Constabulary as per current arrangements. SFRS will support this activity when required by providing additional trainers or facilities for more local training.

SFRS and HWFRS will collaborate on “Annual Fire Investigation Workshops” for specialist staff engaged in fire investigation. These will be arranged so that

the maximum numbers of staff from each service can benefit from this activity, and will be held annually at venues in both service areas.

Fire investigators in both services will be engaged in personal development programmes which are likely to involve qualification in fire investigation. Any investigators considering application to the Council for Registration of Forensic Practitioners in the Fire Investigation Specialty can seek direct support from one of the National Specialty Assessors within SFRS. Assistance with completing applications and case studies will be made available.

HWFRS will allow SFRS access to their seized property and research facilities should the need arise.

Both services will continue to collaborate and share policies related to fire investigation, for example, new visual imaging policies. Each FRS will be free to implement those parts of such policies considered suitable for their own FRS. Equally discussions will be held between FI lead officers regarding provision of common equipment for fire investigators.

## **Mobilising support**

Arrangements are in place through other Agreements for the sharing of fire investigation resources between the FRS. This agreement expands this commitment in two ways:

At any incident which is a “re-call” and at which there is considerable damage caused by the subsequent fire, a fire investigator from the neighbouring brigade can be requested to provide a measure of impartiality to the investigation.

At incidents where there are multiple fatalities or unusually high financial losses either FRS may offer the opportunity to assist in any joint investigation to an officer from the other FRS for purposes of professional development and experience.

## **General**

This Memorandum of Understanding provides mutual assistance and opportunity between the two FRS, and as such there are likely to be no additional financial burdens imposed.

## **Signatories**

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