



# SHROPSHIRE

## Fire and Rescue Service

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**BRIGADE ORDER  
OPERATIONS  
NO. 8**

**PART 3**

**SIGNIFICANT  
EVENT  
INVESTIGATION**

## PART 3 – SIGNIFICANT EVENT INVESTIGATION

### PURPOSE

Significant Event Investigation (SEI) sits within our existing Operational Debriefing Policy and captures the ‘Strategic’ element of the tri-process (Task, Tactical and Strategic). SEI provides a tool kit approach for critically analysing fire incidents where there has been a loss of life, serious injury or a high financial or societal loss where we wish to establish if our legislative fire prevention activities were adequate. ‘Near miss’ events (incidents where the potential for any of the above has been identified e.g. a rescue from fire) should also be analysed using SEI.

This facility provides Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and our partner organisations with a better understanding of the issues leading up to the event and identifies if SFRS, and where appropriate our partners, have done all that could have been done to prevent it. SFRS will use the outcomes of the investigation to further develop the robustness of our policies

### STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This Order supports:

Strategic Aim; 1. “Reduce the risk to life and material loss from fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies in our community”.

Corporate Objective; 1. “Reduce the incidence of deaths and injuries in the community.”

Strategic Aim; 2.” Protect life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies”.

Strategic Aim; 3. “Secure the highest level of safety and welfare for all staff and Authority members by providing effective leadership, training, equipment and systems of work”.

Strategic Aim; 4. “Provide a service that demonstrates quality and best value in service provision”.

### ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND REVIEW

The **Deputy Chief Fire Officer** is responsible for ensuring this Order is implemented across the Brigade.

The **Head of Fire Prevention** will be responsible for the day to day operation of the Order.

The **Head of Fire Prevention** will review this Order biennially in November and as and when organisational changes take place.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has developed robust Fire Prevention and Protection measures. However, it is a sad fact that fire deaths and injuries, and fires resulting in a high financial or societal loss still occur. In such instances, it is vital that we learn from these and implant the lesson of such analysis into our future strategies.

Significant Event Investigation (SEI) has been established to sit within our existing Operational Debriefing Policy and captures the 'Strategic' element of the tri-process (Task, Tactical and Strategic). It provides a tool kit approach for critically analysing fire incidents where there has been;-

- A loss of life.
- Serious injuries.
- Fires resulting in high financial or societal loss where we wish to establish if our legislative fire prevention activities were adequate etc.
- Near-miss events - Incidents where the potential of any of the above has been identified (a rescue from fire for example).

Similarly the process suits Special Service incidents where such analysis helps identify the effectiveness of our Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP), or where such an investigation might form the preliminary research pending a larger public or other enquiry.

This facility provides SFRS (and our partner organisations) with a better understanding of the issues leading to the event, and identify if we and (where appropriate) our partners have done all we could have to have prevented it. SFRS will of course use outcomes of the investigation to further develop the robustness of our policies.

The process will test protocols and working arrangements between our partnerships and provide valuable data to feed into our IRMP process.

The four events listed above would automatically prompt a SEI but should not be seen as definitive. The ethos and methodology of the SEI might suit other circumstances and can be adapted as appropriate.

Equally the process itself should be seen as flexible. The users should view the documentation supporting this process as a 'guide' rather than a 'blue print'

## **PRINCIPALS**

The SEI is designed to ensure a critical examination of the background issues which may have bearing on the cause and outcome of the event. The process must therefore be frank, open and honest if it is to be of any value.

However, it is important that this exercise is not seen as a vehicle to allocate blame or to be destructively critical. The trust needed to ensure openness during the analysis will be dependant upon evidence that this is an event supporting organisational development and is not a finger pointing exercise!

The investigation will focus primarily on strategic issues, however it will inevitably benefit from an understanding of the task and tactical debriefing outcomes which in normal circumstances will have preceded the SEI.

The SEI will identify if there was anything SFRS, or our partner organisations, could have done, or might do in future, to avoid similar occurrences.

The trigger for a SEI will be:

**Compulsory**

- a) Fire deaths, injuries and near misses.
- b) Significant fire loss incidents; and

**Optional -**

- a) Deaths and injuries resulting from Special Services and other incidents attended.

The make up of the SEI team will be formed by the Area Managers and usually comprise two such officers, together with the Performance Review Officer (PRO), who will attend by default and assist the Chair in coordinating the investigation. The selection of the Chair will be dependant upon the nature of the incident, but normally following a fire death / serious injury the Head of Fire Safety will undertake that role. A multi-agency team may be established where appropriate.

Whilst circumstances will dictate the complexity and duration of such investigation, the process suggested need not be excessively time consuming. In most instances a single meeting will service the requirements of this protocol.

Issues of confidentiality must be respected in accordance with the protocols between respective partnerships and other legislative expectations. Where such protocols do not exist, it may be prudent to explore or develop such, prior to the SEI so that all parties are comfortable with the process.

SFRS will be sensitive to the wishes of our partners when publicising or circulating the outcomes of such investigations.

In circumstances where the study relates to deaths and serious injuries, the investigation must be mindful of the sensitivities of the casualties and their families, and ensure that it does not conflict with any other valid investigation which may have been initiated.

The SEI should be undertaken as soon as reasonably practicable after the event. However, it is acknowledged that this may be delayed, or postponed, where comment from the

Coroner's Court is required or supporting detail from another investigative agency would benefit the investigation.

## **PRESENTING INFORMATION**

Various personnel may be required to participate in meetings with the SEI team.

Prior to the meeting those persons whose assistance is sought, will be sent details of areas they will be questioned upon. This will ensure they are well prepared, and able to undertake any research necessary in advance of the meeting, thus avoiding unnecessary delays whilst further study is needed. These prompts should not be viewed as definitive and it is important that they do not adversely constrain or inhibit an open minded approach to the analysis.

It is likely that in many cases reports and other written submissions may suffice and no attendance will be required.

Various documents will be required by the team to facilitate a comprehensive study and analysis of the incident. These will be sought from the appropriate officers and include:

- The Fire Investigation Officer; = Copy of post mortem report, the Coroners report, the Fire Investigation report and FDR1 form
- The Officer in Charge (OI/C) First Attendance and Incident Commander; = Details of 'task' and 'tactical' debriefs following the incident.
- Fire Control; = Incident log and audio recordings of call.

## **CONCLUDING THE INVESTIGATION**

Outcomes of the investigation will be forwarded to the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) for their attention. Where required these may be presented to a Policy Group meeting as determined by the CFO.

A record of all such investigations and outcome activities will be maintained by the Performance Review Officer (PRO). Where appropriate the PRO will share the responsibility for ensuring such activities are adequately addressed by the most suitable group/manager.

Partners and other agencies involved in the process will be provided copies of the investigation outcomes and SFRS will seek to work with them to redress any improvement areas the SEI may identify.

The person responsible for ensuring the implementation of the policy would be the Director of Community Safety (currently the DCFO). Day to day management would rest with the Head of Fire Safety.