

North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Special Service Calls Standard Operating Procedure

INTRODUCTION

The Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004 empowers Fire Authorities to use the Brigade and their equipment for purposes other than firefighting if they think fit, and to make a charge for any service rendered.

Application to North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

The personnel and equipment of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service may be employed for purposes other than firefighting (herein called "Special Services"), and a charge will be made except as stated below.

Classification of Special Service:

Special Services may be placed into one of two classifications:

- (i) Emergency Special Service
- (ii) Non-emergency Special Service

Definition:

Emergency Special Service calls are defined as those which involve the saving of life, or emergency rescue operations which release, or assist in the release of, persons from life threatening or dangerous situations, and all services of a humanitarian nature which promote human welfare or reduce suffering. These calls will not normally attract a charge.

Incidents or calls received to the following may be classified as Emergency Special Services:

- (i) Road, rail or air accidents.
- (ii) Persons trapped in machinery, marooned by flood water etc.
- (iii) Leakage of asphyxiating gas, such as ammonia or sewer gas.
- (iv) Persons requiring resuscitation after near drowning, or suffering from gas poisoning.
- (v) Persons trapped in railings or other structures or equipment.
- (vi) Natural disasters e.g. collapse of buildings, storm damage, major flooding etc.

In all cases of Emergency Special Services, Brigade Control will mobilise resources immediately on receipt of the call. Where it is likely that a charge may be levied for the service required, the mobilising officer will inform the caller accordingly.

Chargeable Special Services

Non emergency Special Service calls, for which a charge will normally be made, may be classified under the following headings:

- (i) Decontamination of thoroughfares fouled by spillage of oil, acids or other hazardous substances ((non RTA).
- (ii) Pumping water from flooded premises/vessels when no question of danger

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to the public or general public misfortune arises from a natural disaster.

- (iii) Removing chimney pots etc which have become a danger to the public or have not arisen as a result of a natural disaster.
- (iv) The sheeting of roofs where the damage is not a result of storms or other natural disasters.
- (iv) Services which involve trapped animals or birds, etc.
- (vii) Replenishing water supplies.
- (viii) Filling of swimming pools etc.
- (ix) Taking part in a media production.
- (x) Providing safety cover at a media production.
- (xi) Providing standby cover at large Public Events.

Special Note: The carrying out of the services in the section above is subject to the maintenance of Fire Cover at all times.

Responsibility for mobilising the Brigades' resources rests with the Mobilising Officer in Fire Control. In all instances where a call is received either in Brigade Control or at a Fire Station and from the nature of the call it would seem appropriate that a charge will be made, then the caller must be advised that a charge may be made prior to the mobilisation of any resource. If the caller is a third party or the police, however, an appliance or officer will be mobilised.

No chargeable special service should be undertaken which is likely to cause disproportionate risks to Fire Brigade personnel. This is particularly applicable where animals need to be rescued from above ground level. When such a call is received, attendance should be made only at the request of the Police or RSPCA. If a call is received from any other source the local Inspector of the RSPCA must be informed by Control.

When it is necessary to alleviate damage or inconvenience due to circumstances not under the direct control of the person requiring the service, i.e. flooding due to exceptional rainfall, overflowing of rivers or canals, bursting of water mains, etc, the incident should be inspected before an appliance and crew are requested to attend.

In the event of adverse weather conditions or flooding, resulting in numerous calls being received, Control should arrange for additional Officers to be available for inspecting incidents.

Brigade Control will determine at that time the method of identifying additional resources.

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Preference should be given to public utilities and liaison should be made with Local Authority Officials in order that appliances can be used to good effect. This is of particular importance when drains are blocked.

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Requests to undertake special services at allegedly dangerous structures e.g. for the removal of over-hanging slates, unsafe chimney stacks or pots, etc, should have an officer mobilised to assess the situation. The Officer attending the incident will decide whether any further attendance from the Brigade is necessary or will advise the owner, occupier or Police of the action to be taken and of any charges.

The onus for securing property and maintaining it in a safe condition rests with the owner. Provision is made in Section 78 of the Building Act, 1984, for a Local Authority (i.e. District Council or City of York Council) to take appropriate action which appears to be necessary to prevent danger to persons from buildings or structures. Such powers will usually be exercised for the Local Authority by its Engineer and Surveyor.

If the property or structure cannot be made safe at the time, then the police should be advised so that they may cordon off the danger area and have it adequately supervised so as to prevent any accident to a member of the public.

Requests made for the loan or hire of equipment of a minor nature will be made to the appropriate Group Manager, requests for more substantial amounts of equipment will be made via the Service Delivery Area Manager who will liaise with the Community Risk Section.

Requests for effecting entry to premises where persons are locked out (or where children or old persons are locked in will not normally attract a charge e.g.:

- (i) Baby or young child locked inside.
- (ii) Old or infirm person locked inside or out.
- (iii) Danger of fire or other hazard.

Officers in Charge are reminded that apart from (iii) above, the Fire Brigade do not have powers of entry to perform Special Services. Hence, in cases of (i) and (ii) above there is a need to validate, as far as is practicable, that persons requesting the service or those requiring assistance, can produce evidence of occupancy. Where there is reasonable doubt as to occupancy, entry should be effected in the presence of a Police Officer.

Where humanitarian circumstances do not exist the caller will be advised to contact a suitable tradesman to effect an entry i.e. builder, joiner or locksmith.

However, subject to the exigencies of the service, and subject to the following conditions, the service may be carried out and the appropriate charge made.

Where a special service call is received to persons locked in or out of premises, Officers in Charge are to satisfy themselves that the person requiring entry is entitled to admittance. Among the factors they must have regard to include:

- (i) The possibility that electrical or gas appliances have been left on inside the premises and could pose a fire hazard.
- (ii) Can the Fire Brigade action be justified (e.g. by the prevention of injury or distress?).
- (iii) Ownership can usually be established by questioning the person purporting to be the occupier, or by making enquiries of neighbours.

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- (iv) Failure to render the Service will cause distress or danger to the applicant and/or the public.
- (v) The possible training advantages for Brigade personnel.
- (vi) Any Public Relations benefit.

An initial inspection should be made to determine what action, if any, is to be taken and to secure the signature of the applicant undertaking to meet the official charges. The applicant must be handed a copy of the Special Service charges and their attention drawn to the scale of charges applicable.

Signatures must be obtained beforehand, wherever possible, for all chargeable services. If it is clearly desirable that assistance should be given without delay, the applicant should be informed that a charge will be made and the appropriate immediate action taken.

Where the special service involves any possibility of the need for immediate operational action, e.g. standing by during a fully operational appliance and crew should be used. This will inevitably involve reconsideration of mobilising procedures and these must be agreed with the Officer in Charge of Brigade Control before proceeding.

When requests to fill disused petroleum tanks with water are received, a Fire Safety Officer must be informed before the operation is sanctioned. Advice must also be given about the need to consult the Environment Agency before disposing of the waste water.

Reporting

Form FIRE/3 must be completed in respect of every Special Service rendered, including those of a life saving or humanitarian nature, and forwarded via the Group Manager to the Commercial Services section together with an accompanying report as necessary in order that a charge or otherwise may be determined.

Stop and informative messages must be initiated for all Special Services.

GUIDANCE ON SPECIFIC SPECIAL SERVICES

Use of Water for Special Services

When it is necessary to take water from public hydrants in connection with special services, prior permission must be obtained from the relevant water company by the person requesting the service, who will be responsible for the settlement of any consequent account rendered. The Water Officer at BHQ must also be informed. The water company will be informed in writing by Brigade Headquarters of an estimate of the quantity of water taken. The following information must, therefore be added to form FIRE/3.

- (a) The name of the appropriate water authority.
- (b) An approximation of the total quantity of mains water taken.

Supply of Drinking Water

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Drinking water for human consumption will not be supplied unless required to do so by the relevant water company, local government or government authority.

Persons requesting a supply of drinking water will be advised that they may make application or such a supply to the appropriate water company. They may be given the name and address of the water company, and their telephone number.

If requested by the water company to supply water for human consumption, the water company will be informed that the Fire Authority cannot guarantee and accepts no responsibility for the purity of the water delivered.

Supply of Non-Drinking Water

If, however, it is quite clearly stated that the water is not required for human consumption but for other domestic use and the person requiring the service has obtained the approval of the Environment Agency or the relevant water company, a record of the amount of water used should be kept and the Environment Agency/water company informed after the completion of the service.

It will be made clear to the persons making the request that water supplied for domestic use of this nature will not, under any circumstances, be delivered into domestic water systems or wells from which drinking water might conceivably be obtained. Form FIRE/3 will be completed and signed to this effect.

Supplies of Water for Farm Animals

Callers requesting supplies of water for farm animals will, in the first instance, be recommended to ask for assistance from the National Farmers Union. In the exceptional event that the National Farmers Union, the relevant water company or the Environment Agency are unable to assist, approval will be given by the Duty Officer subject to operational commitments. The person requiring the Service must obtain the approval of the Environment Agency or the relevant water company.

Before an Officer arranges delivery of the water for the cattle, the applicant should be informed that no guarantee can be given as to the purity of the water to be delivered and will require the applicant to sign the Form of Application indemnifying the Fire Authority in this respect.

Persons locked in Lifts

In the case of release from lifts, the person or company responsible for the maintenance of the lift will be responsible for any charges incurred, and not the person(s) locked in. The name and address of the responsible person or company must therefore be obtained for including on Form FIRE/3. If a responsible person/company representative is not present or is unwilling to complete Form FIRE/3, Officer in Charge will undertake any actions necessary to release marooned persons and state clearly on Form FIRE/3 the reason for non-completion of Form FIRE/3.