UK International Search and Rescue

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Next Review Due 31/03/2029

1. Purpose

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority (HIWFRA) is committed to ensuring that Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have an efficient and effective fire and rescue service which makes life safer for everyone.

This is HIWFRA's Position Statement for United Kingdom International Search and Rescue (UKISAR) and forms part of the HIWFRA's Response Policy.

2. Authority's Position

UK International Search and Rescue (UKISAR) is a cooperative of a group of UK Fire and Rescue Services, each contributing competent firefighters (typically those from Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams), equipment and providing resources when requested to respond to humanitarian crises by a country in distress and on behalf of His Majesty's Government.

The UK Government, through the Department for International Development (DfID), looks to UKISAR to provide international search and rescue to countries overseas who have suffered from natural disasters. Though used infrequently, it gives an instantly reliable, highly professional service when called upon and relieves suffering from those who need foreign aid the most.

The UKISAR team responds primarily to international disasters on behalf of the UK Government, but also carries out activities to support other nations to develop local and national USAR capabilities. Many of the skills needed for deployment to UKISAR are maintained by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) firefighters' involvement in the USAR capability, provided by the UK Government as part of the National Resilience Programme.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) supports UKISAR with strategic and tactical groups.

Every five years, UKISAR must be reclassified under the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) to permit the team to be deployed legitimately. UKISAR teams are deployed in most cases for up to 10 days where they are self-sufficient and provide 24-hour operations, and normally deployed to undertake tasks such as:

- Assessment
- Search for deeply trapped victims
- Scene stability
- Gaining access to structures
- Advanced life support
- Rescues, including using heavy equipment
- Emergency medical team and field hospital capability logistical support

UKISAR deployment is not part of HIWFRA's statutory duty, but HIWFRA has the powers to do so within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Section 11.

We will endorse the important contribution made by the UKISAR team in the aftermath of disasters that help to reduce loss of life and human suffering.

We will provide the capability for UKISAR operations from HIWFRS when requested to do so by His Majesty's Government, and ensure maintenance of the appropriate resources to facilitate the required capability.

We will recover UKISAR operational deployment costs, and recover capacity building, certification, and training costs where appropriate.

We will promote HIWFRS's deployment to UKISAR by reporting back to our communities, highlighting the skills obtained through deployment are fully transferable and enhance our local response and rescue capabilities.