INTRODUCTION

This training note is intended to provide an introduction to students attending Firefighter Initial programmes, on the subject of Teamwork and Communications as relevant to Rescue and Fighting Services (RFFS) employed at airports. This training note should be read in conjunction with all other notes covering operational matters and training.

AIM

To ensure that all students attending the Firefighter Initial programme understand fully the elements of, and the importance of, effective teamwork and communications.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of the instructional session dealing with this subject, after detailed study of this note and the practical fireground sessions covering this subject you will be able to:

- Recognise the importance of Teamwork in the Airport Fire Service
- State the attributes of an effective team member
- Define and demonstrate some basic Fire Service signals and words of command

CONTENTS

The subject will be dealt with under the following headings:

- Introduction to Teamwork
- How to be an Effective Team Member
- Training
- Communications
- Words of Command
- Signals
INTRODUCTION TO TEAMWORK

At each airport the rescue and fire fighting service will consist of a small team of highly trained personnel. Depending upon the Rescue and Fire Fighting (RFF) category of the airport the size of the team may vary between 6 in number for a category 4 airport up to around 16 for a category 9. If one considers that the aircraft passenger capacity for those particular airports may range from around 80 up to and in excess of 400 it will be readily appreciated that in view of the numbers of passengers involved the RFF crew is relatively small in number.

At the scene of a major aircraft incident there may be many priorities immediately on arrival such as:

- Passengers vacating a burning aircraft in a semi conscious and/or disorientated state.
- A serious fire either already involving or threatening to involve the aircraft fuselage.
- Fuel leaking onto the surrounding area from ruptured fuel tanks and fuel lines.
- Unconscious passengers who are clear of the aircraft and yet needing urgent medical attention.
- Passengers remaining on board the aircraft who will perish unless rescued promptly.
- Limited water supplies available on the fire appliances and an urgent need to introduce a water relay.

It will become readily apparent from the above list that a group of personnel who have been properly trained and who are able to work closely together as a team, with trust in other members of the team, will have a greater chance of success under such stressful and critical conditions.

“A team is like a chain, it is only as strong as its weakest link”. When called upon to attend the scene of an aircraft accident the Airport Fire Service cannot afford to have any weak links in its team. It is therefore essential that everyone involved understand the necessity of, and the requirements, which go into the making of a real team.

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE TEAM MEMBER

There are a number of key elements which go into developing and maintaining a team, these include the following:

- team spirit
- skills
- discipline
- confidence
- flexibility
- commitment to safety

These are explained in some detail below.

Team Spirit

Everyone in the team should be co-operative and sensitive to the needs of the team. They should be prepared to share their experiences and information to the betterment of the team. Team spirit is not achieved overnight, it requires the commitment of every team member to contribute towards the teams' objectives. It also requires training, and those responsible for training to provide feedback to improve performance.

Skills

It is likely that in any team there will be a combination of skills rather than everyone being highly skilled at everything. One of the advantages of a team is that it allows for the skills of individuals to be brought together and utilised for the success of the team. As the team works together it is likely that individuals will develop their own skills and also begin to strengthen the areas in which they are less strong.
In practical terms, within the Fire Service the whole team will have certain basic skills and yet certain individuals will be particularly skilled in certain aspects of the team’s work. A successful team will ensure that an individual’s skills are used to maximum advantage and effect.

A successful team will devote much of its energy honing the skills of individuals whilst at the same time learning and developing new skills.

A good team member is one who is technically sound and practically competent. With these levels of skills they will know technically what to do and why it should be done, and practically they will know how to do it and be capable of actually doing it. Any team member who is not sound in both a technical and practical sense will soon become “the weak link in the chain”.

**Discipline**

It is an essential requirement that each member of the team is prepared to accept the authority of the team leader. Under Fire Service operational conditions all orders need to be carried out immediately and without question. Such discipline will emerge naturally as the team develops and confidence is gained both in the team members and the team leaders.

**Confidence**

Confidence in ones own ability and in the ability of colleagues is an underlying feature of any successful team. With respect to the success of Fire Service operations it is also essential that team members have confidence in the operational equipment and also in the laid down operational procedures and support arrangements, such confidence will be achieved through a well managed training programme and through working together.

**Flexibility**

One of the special ingredients of a successful team is the ability of team members to be flexible in their approach. Basic Fire Service training is initially undertaken by numbers so that team members memorise the role of every team member. If all members of the team are familiar with the roles of every other member they will soon be able to pick up those duties if for any reason that particular team member fails to, or is unable to do so for themselves.

Fire Service operations are such that any prescribed plans often need to be changed or adapted at short notice to cope with changing circumstances and dynamic risk assessments. At operational incidents it is vital that every team member is able to cope with and adapt to any changing requirements.

**Commitment to Safety**

Fire and Rescue Operations are potentially hazardous and may require team members to take, what in less urgent circumstances, could be regarded as unreasonable risks to personal safety. Such risks will often be necessary if lives are to be saved.

Structured training programmes will ensure that all personnel are trained under conditions which realistically represent those likely to be encountered at the scene of an actual aircraft accident. Such programmes may expose those undergoing training to some risk, although this will always be assessed and balanced against the benefits to be gained.

Whilst risks to the safety of personnel under operational circumstances may never be totally eradicated, personnel should be trained to deal with hazardous situations. Clearly defined procedures which have been carefully worked out, practised and which are reviewed on an ongoing basis must also be part of the basic safety framework of the RFFS. It is essential to the success and safety of the team that any procedures for the safety of personnel are known and adhered to by every member of the team.
TRAINING

You may have noted in the paragraphs explaining the six key attributes of effective team members, training is frequently mentioned. Training in the Airport Fire Service is the keystone to effective teamwork.

You, as an airport firefighter, have a right to receive well-planned, relevant and regular training. By the same token, those who provide you with that training have a right to expect you to be committed to, and fully involve yourself in the training to develop yourself and the effectiveness of the team.

COMMUNICATIONS

We use various methods of communication in the Fire Service, from complex radio and text messages using the latest systems, to simple words of command and signals.

It is vital that all firefighters can correctly give and interpret these words and signals. We use standard words of command and signals to avoid confusion and to ensure that communications continue effectively despite difficult circumstances like darkness, smoke, noise etc.
**WORDS OF COMMAND**

The following words of command are to be used during training and where applicable, at incidents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Action or meaning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Still</strong></td>
<td>Used by any crew member in an emergency, i.e., to prevent an accident and then with maximum force; the crew remain perfectly still exactly where they are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rest</strong></td>
<td>Used by the Instructor when carrying out a drill to point out a mistake; the crew remain still</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Well</strong></td>
<td>To indicate that the position desired has been reached, e.g., when extending or lowering a ladder</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Carry on</strong></td>
<td>Given after ‘Rest’ or ‘Still’; the crew carry on with what they were doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>As you were</strong></td>
<td>Cancels an order previously given; firefighters resume their previous positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crews number</strong></td>
<td>No 1 of the first crew calls ‘one’, No 1 of the second crew calls ‘two’, and so on until all crews are numbered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dismount</strong></td>
<td>The crew dismount from the appliance and return to the ‘Fall-in’ position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extend</strong></td>
<td>To increase the overall length of a ladder</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Extend to lower</strong></td>
<td>To raise the extending portion of a ladder to clear pawls for lowering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall-in</strong></td>
<td>The crew turns to the right and after a short pause falls in three paces to the rear of and facing the appliance/equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall-out</strong></td>
<td>The crew turns to the right, pauses and breaks off quietly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Get to work</strong></td>
<td>The crew carries out the drill as detailed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Head in</strong></td>
<td>To move the head of a ladder towards a building or aircraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Head out</strong></td>
<td>To move the head of a ladder away from a building or aircraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heel in</strong></td>
<td>To move the heel of a ladder into the building or aircraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heel out</strong></td>
<td>To move the heel of a ladder away from a building or aircraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>House</strong></td>
<td>To reduce the overall length of a ladder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knock off</strong></td>
<td>To close down the water supply at the pump delivery and/or the hydrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make up</strong></td>
<td>The crew make-up and re-stow all equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mount</strong></td>
<td>The crew mounts the appliance. The riding position of each member will depend on the design and other factors, but No 2 will always be the driver and No 1 will, whenever possible, sit in the seat on the driver’s near side.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Pawls**

To indicate when descending a ladder that the pawls are fitted on the next round below and the feet should be placed towards the centre of the round.

This command (along with ‘Step in’ and ‘Step out’) should be used during drills to accustom personnel to the procedure, particularly when performing rescue drills.

The order should be given when the leading foot reaches the round immediately above the hazard.

**Pitch**

To erect a ladder against a building, e.g., ‘Pitch to the third floor’

**Slip**

To remove a ladder from the appliance

**Stand from under**

ü To be used by anybody who has to lower equipment or drop debris from a height when there is a risk that it may strike someone
ü When lowering items, personnel should ensure that no-one is immediately below
ü Also to be used when equipment is accidentally dropped from a height

**Stand by to lower**

To be used when two or more firefighters are to take the strain in preparation to lower a heavy object

**Lower**

After taking the strain the firefighters all lower simultaneously

**Stand by to lift**

To be used when two or more firefighters are to take the strain to lift a heavy object

**Lift**

After taking the strain the firefighters all lift simultaneously

**Step in**

To indicate that the overlap of extension is reached when descending a ladder with extensions on the underside. (See Note on ‘Pawls’ above)

**Step out**

To indicate that the overlap of the extension has been reached when descending a ladder with extensions on the underside. (See Note on ‘Pawls’ above)

**Under run**

To raise a ladder from a horizontal to a vertical position and vice versa

**Water on**

To turn on the hydrant, open a delivery valve on the pump, etc., according to the drill being performed

**As far as detailed - carry on**

This should be used so that a long procedure or one with considerable detail can be built up in stages
**FIRE SERVICE SIGNALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORDER</th>
<th>ARM SIGNAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water on</td>
<td>The arm is raised sideways over the head to its fullest extent and lowered smartly to the side. This signal should never be given until the branch-holder is ready and prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase pressure</td>
<td>As for “Water on” but repeated several times. Pump operators should increase pressure by 1 bar, unless otherwise instructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce pressure</td>
<td>One arm is extended horizontally from the shoulder and the other arm is raised vertically. The pressure should be reduced by 1 bar unless otherwise instructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knock off</td>
<td>The right arm is extended horizontally, swung across the chest and back again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flush out</td>
<td>Both arms are extended upwards at a 30° angle and then dropped to the side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make up all equipment</td>
<td>Both arms are extended outwards and dropped to the sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All firefighters report to the initiator</td>
<td>The right arm is swung round the head and the hand is placed flat on the head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement of signals</td>
<td>All visual signals should be acknowledged by repeating the signal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whenever practicable, the best way to convey orders is to send radio messages direct to the pump operator. Alternatively, a messenger could be used.

There are occasions when messages or commands may be passed by signal – equally there are times when they could result in confusion or danger.

Examples of when visual signals should **NOT** be used include:

- when two or more pumps are at work and a signal that is intended for one pump operator might be obeyed by another pump operator
- instructions to raise or lower pressure when more than one branch is working from the same pump
- at night or in poor visibility

**SUMMARY**

It is a well understood fact that the saving of life and the successful intervention at a serious aircraft accident/fire situation will not happen by chance. It will only result if the rescue and fire fighting service responds as a well trained and co-ordinated team. It is the responsibility of every team member to commit themselves to the success of the team. In practical terms this means that every member must acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for them to be considered competent in their role.